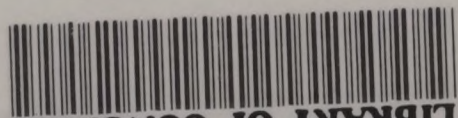


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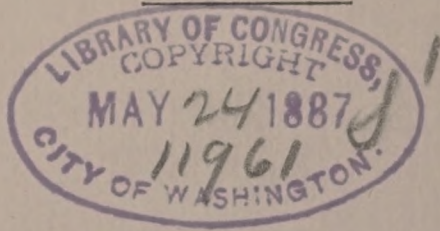
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THE BURTON TORCH,

—BY—

FLORENCE M. CAMPBELL.

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TO
THE NICEST MAN AND WOMAN THAT I KNOW,
THIS BOOK
IS LOVINGLY INSCRIBED
BY
THEIR DAUGHTER.

PREFACE.

In this every-day story for every-day people, "Jack" is a pine knot, a beacon-lighted symbol of a girl's life and work.

We are all of us torch-bearers to "let our light so shine before men." The flickering light may not throw its rays beyond the home circle, but we hope it may at least light up our own corner, and it can always throw its beams *upward*. Nothing can be accomplished by blindly groping.

The prevailing prayer of every worker should be an echo of the dying petition of the grand old German poet: "Light, more light!"

With the advent of every worker in this broad world of ours, comes a work for that one to do. Our girls saw and did that work which lay nearest them. I end my brief introduction with a quotation from *Aurora Leigh*, not only for the duties performed by the heroines of this volume, but as a plea for the grand army of working women, everywhere.

"Measure not the work
Until the day's out and the labours done;
Then bring your guages. If the day's work's scant,
Why, call it scant; affect no compromise;
And, in that, we have nobly striven at least.
Deal with us nobly, women though we be,
And honor us with truth, if not with praise."

F. M. C.

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JACK'S AFIRE,

OR,

THE BURTON TORCH.

CHAPTER I.

FINALE, THE WORD PRONOUNCED AND SPELLED.

“Finale.” The word struck terror to the hearts of the trio that stood on the left of the old school-room. It was nearly four o’clock, and the school was spelling down; only four remained to contest the victor’s honor. The little girl, who stood alone on the right, looked steadily at the opposing force—three of the larger boys—and awaited her turn.

“P-h-e-n-a-l-y, Finale,” spelled Robert Peyton, feeling his way carefully along the syllables.

“Next.”

“Fee-na-l-y,” each letter growing fainter as he proceeded.

“Wrong, Ned!”

“Fe—I can’t spell it!” and Will Brown, who always laughed when he was annoyed, giggled and sat down, vexed with himself for not knowing how to spell the word, and at Mr. Mills for pronouncing it.

“As no one can spell this word, it is impossible to decide which is the champion,” said the teacher.

“F-i-n-a-l-e, Finale;” the letters are given in a sweet childish voice. Mr. Mills turned with a smile. “Right, Madie! I had forgotten you were there. We declare you the victor.”

There was a feeble effort to cheer her, but the young gentlemen were too mortified over their defeat to be magnanimous to the winner just then. "If it had been Rob or Ned, I wouldn't have cared a cent; but I do hate to be beaten like that by a girl," said Will Brown, as they filed out of the old stone building and gathered in groups to discuss the day's events.

"I knew how to spell the word, but I never heard it pronounced that way before," said Robert Peyton. "For my part, I'm glad Madie spelled the school down. She always remembers everything. Mr. Mills told us the other day about that very word, and she was the only one who remembered it, until it was too late. I remembered all about it just as soon as she began to spell it. Let us not bother about that now, we've got to get home and do the chores; to-night will be a grand one for coasting! Merry Christmas, Aggie!" As he spoke, Ned Phillips threw a soft ball of snow at his schoolmate, and turned homeward. "I will wait for Madie!" called Aggie, brushing the feathery flakes from her cloak.

The winter's sun had dropped behind the belt of woodland, and, as if loth to leave a world so fair, built a ladder of glory from cloud to cloud, and lifted himself to gaze once more on the quiet scene.

A broad prairie, whose billowy outlines are softened by the mantle of snow, farm-houses here and there, farmers hurrying to and fro, for it is "chore time;" each yard is filled with patient animals, waiting to be housed. The band of children had separated into groups, and the echo of their "Merry Christmas!" came back from the hill-side as it was passed from one to another, even to the little band going "cross-lots." This group had reached the hill, and halted to wait for the little girls, as Madie had joined Aggie at the door, and both were coming rapidly toward them. "What made you wait, Mai? we'll be late home now!" "There, Ned, don't you say a single word! I hurried just as fast as I could. Don't you remember the story mamma told us last night, all about 'Peace and good will?' I thought of it, and of what Mr. Mills said the

other day to papa, that he didn't care to have a vacation, as he had nowhere to go. Mamma told me I might ask him to come to dinner to-morrow, and I did, and I wished him a Merry Christmas, too! What do you suppose he said?" "I don't know, something cross, I presume!"

"Ned Phillips! I should think you'd be ashamed! He said, and I just cried, too: 'Little girl, do you know I shall take your good wishes as a Christmas gift, the first I have received in ten years!' Just think, every one of you, not a single speck of a Christmas for longer than I have lived! I just wish I could give him something to-morrow! But everything I have is so dreadfully young; may be mamma can help me, she always knows just what to do."

They had reached the low, rambling farm-house which looked as if it had stretched itself over as much territory as it could, because there was enough and to spare, and had settled down to rest.

"Good night, Aggie!"

"Merry Christmas!"

"Oh, say, come over to-morrow, and tell us what Santa Claus brings you!" "Yes, if mamma will let me. Merry Christmas, all!" and Aggie darted away.

"Mamma," said Madie, "I want to ask you about something; are you busy?"

"Yes, dear, at present! Can you ask it just as well after a while, or will you forget it?"

"I'll wait until story-time; I believe I'll bring in the wood and chips, so Ned can go coasting."

"You need not mind, Mai, unless it will help you to work off steam," said Ned, as he took the milk-pail and started for the barn.

"I've finished my chores," he declared, a half hour later.

"So have I," laughed Madie, "and supper is ready, too!"

A cheerful family gathered around the table. Mr. Burton, a grave, quiet man, who loved his books and peaceful home-life, saw that his family were provided for, and took things as a matter of course. Mrs. Burton, a pleas-

ant, cheery woman, who, when a girl, had had her dreams, but gave them up to settle down to the busy, work-a-day life of a farmer's wife, and had now begun to dream again for her children. Madeline, the eldest, an impulsive child of nine; Christabel, round-faced and merry, two years younger; Bert, rollicking and happy, who said he was "four come September;" and baby Benjie, who had shortened his elder sister's name to 'Madie,' and all but her father had adopted his plan; Ned, the cousin, whose father and mother had "fallen asleep" two years before, had ever since found a home at his uncle's, and did not *seem* like, but *was* like one of the family, completed the group. Mrs. Burton's sister's child was very dear to her, and she entered into all the hopes and plans of the blue-eyed, earnest boy of sixteen, as readily as into those of her own little ones. It was beautiful to see the tender chivalry of this boy to his adopted mother, shy and awkward in his manner, which he hid from others under a guise of brusqueness; tall and slender, at that period when the man stature is too great for the boy; the man will be here soon, and will have a goodly habitation to dwell in, but the boy who is soon to vacate, hardly knows what to do with the hands, and feet, and restless brain that have grown beyond him.

"I expect Madie has told you the news. Pretty good, wasn't it?" he asked, as he handed Benjie his cup of milk.

"No, Ned; she said she had something to say to me, and I supposed it was some of mother's help she wanted, so we postponed it; what was it, Madie?"

"It wasn't the 'news' at all, mamma! It was some of your help. I forgot about the news."

"Why, the little girl is modest! Well, who do you suppose spelled the school down?"

"Did you, Madeline?" queried Mr. Burton, taking an interest in the conversation for the first time.

"Yes, papa, and the word was finale."

"Quite a word to end on. Have the papers come yet, Bell?"

"Yes, Mr. Brown brought them this afternoon."

The meal was ended, Mr. Burton took his papers and was oblivious to everything around him for the remainder of the evening. When the work was done, all gathered together in the cozy sitting-room.

"Why, Ned, aren't you going coasting?" Mrs. Burton asked.

"I guess not to-night. We can all try it to-morrow evening."

"Now, Madie, what is it?"

She told of her interview with Mr. Mills. "Mamma, can't you think of something to give him?"

"Give him a pair of socks," suggested Ned, teasingly.

"Ned," said his aunt reprovingly. "You should remember that Madie is a little girl. I will think about it, dear. We will try to plan something."

Madie's face flushed at Ned's words. Socks were a vexed question with her. She hated to knit; but her Aunt Sarah, who was the "great expectations" of the Burton family, insisted that a child should have no childhood, and should commence a woman's work at a very early age. Two years before Madie had begun a pair of socks for her father. Not being able to finish them at the appointed time, she postponed it until his birthday; then warm weather coming on, and her father knowing of the gift, her zeal slackened somewhat. Ned, mischievously congratulated her on her economy, as this pair of socks had served for two Christmas and two birthday gifts.

Ned, seeing the tears in her eyes, came close to her and said: "I'm sorry, Mai! Let us get our presents and hang up our stockings."

The stockings were gotten, and each pinned his pair together, from Mr. Burton to Benjie. Then began that mysterious wrapping of parcels, and crowding down into the stockings, with side glances over the shoulder to "see if any was a peeking," as Bert said; and with a good-night kiss all around, leaving the mother to put in her offerings of love.

"How foolish you are, Bell!" Aunt Sarah would often

say to her. "It is so childish. Madeline and Edwin are at least old enough to give up such silly notions."

"No. Sarah, I like it," Mrs. Burton would reply in her pleasant way. "It is nice to go back and be a child again for one day out of a year. I am sure I enjoy it as much as the children."

So the loving silliness went on, and Christmas was always a glad day in the Burton farm-house.

CHAPTER II.

MERRY CHRISTMAS !

Ever since Ned had come to live with the Burtons, there had been a pleasant strife between his cousins and himself as to who should be the first to call out greeting on Christmas morning. With this thought uppermost in Madie's mind, she awakened during the "weesma' hours." She thought of her teacher and the grieved expression on the boyish face the night before. "I wish I could give him something that he would like and keep for always." Just then a slight noise in the adjoining room caused her to lose her train of thought. She listened a moment, then bounded to her feet and began to dress noiselessly. A whispered word to Christa, a series of suppressed giggles, and both were ready. They opened the door cautiously, and peered into the hall, to make sure that no one was lurking there, then ran lightly across, secreting themselves close by Ned's door, which was almost immediately opened by the young gentleman himself. Carefully and quietly he was stealing along, when the girls behind him shouted their merry greeting.

This aroused the household. Bert came rolling out, calling to Madie to help him "find thumthing to put on."

"Stand still, Bert, or I never shall dress you. There, now, let us hurry."

The room looked mysterious in the gray morning light. The chairs with their queer trappings attracted Bert's attention. "My, isn't it awful nice! Wonder what Santa Claus has brung us?" he said, hugging himself in an ecstasy of delight.

From mamma's room came sounds indicating that Benjie was struggling against parental authority. "P'ease less go to Kissmas, p'ease less do!"

"Bless his dear, sweet, little heart! He shall come

to Christmas. His own sister will bring him!" and in a moment he was crowing and clapping his hands, as he sat in Madie's arms before the fire.

"Papa! see your presents first and we'll go down 'cording to age," said Bert, with a heroic effort at self-denial. After a little demurring, Mr. Burton went to his easy chair, took the socks there suspended, and began to inspect their contents, although a trifle shamefacedly. Little articles that the girls had worked evenings when he was busy out of doors, holding themselves ready to run and hide them at the first hint of his approach, both volumes of Dr. Kane's Arctic Explorations, purchased with the combined savings of Mrs. Burton and Ned, as she was not the one to go to her husband and ask for a few dollars with which to get him a present.

Mr. Burton had expressed himself as greatly pleased with his gifts, when Ned, seeing that Madie was busy with baby Benjie, spoke to his uncle. "Your socks are from Madie and she knit them herself."

"Did she? they are very nice!" Turning to Madie, he continued: "I shall be very proud to wear my little girl's handiwork."

"Oh, papa! I have given those socks to you over and over again! It has taken me two years to knit this one pair. I wish I could give you something else."

"But, if papa is satisfied his little daughter ought to be. Come, let us see what mamma has hidden in her stockings."

Madie and Ned had saved their little funds, and had a daguerreotype of themselves taken and placed in a handsome case. Mamma gazed at the youthful faces, but there was such a mist before her eyes, that she was not able to tell whether they were true or not. Several other articles made up her Christmas. Then came the children, eager and glad, as each love token was brought to view. "Each has a book, and a toy, and something useful, to make a variety," Ned said.

They gathered around Benjie's high-chair, while he looked at his treasures, crowing and screaming with de-

light at his horse and "wagum," and doll, and gaily-colored picture-book. "I just wish I could see Mr. Santa Claus. I'd tell him I was much terbliged," said Bert.

"Now, dearies, let us clear the things away and get ready for the company," said Mrs. Burton.

"Oh, dear," sighed Madie, "Aunt Sarah will be sure to say something awful about our presents."

"Never mind, Madie! We'll be happy as long as we can. See if you'll get your work done as soon as I get mine."

At Ned's suggestion, the little girls went to work with a will, and when he returned they ran to meet him with the joyful news that they had beaten him.

"All right; there is another year coming and we'll see whether you get the start of me then or not."

"I want to get another peep at my gifts before they all get here, they seem newer and nicer every time I look at them. My dear little Bible. Mamma, I'm glad we each have one."

"Come, come, Mai! you'll be hoarse before our cousins arrive; you should be dignified as I am."

"I think Christmas breakfast is lots nicer than any other; these cakes are nuff sight better than yesterday!" gurgled Bert.

"Do your socks fit you, papa?" asked Madie, as she stood by her father in the quiet room.

"Yes, dear, and I shall think a great deal of them. Get your hood and come to the barn with me." In the stable was "Old Bet," shaking her horns and looking very important; by her side a little calf that had come to keep the holidays at the old farm. "Madie, you can have this calf, if you like."

"Papa, how glad I am! I will do ever so much knitting and other work!" She ran to the house. "Mamma and all of you, listen: Papa has given me the cutest little calf—red, with a white star in her forehead, and she shall be called Star!"

The sound of bells brought them all to the door. The great sleigh filled with relatives from the city drew up and emptied. No need to tell how merry greetings were

exchanged, nor how a general commotion followed ere the wraps were removed and all were quietly settled before the cheerful fireside. Such confusion is necessary at all family reunions. Uncle Ben and Aunt Prue; he, cheerful and kindly; she, fat and satisfied, bound to have a good time everywhere; Aunt Sarah, prim and dignified; Ray, Phil, and Carrie; the boys just entering their teens; their sister, a cheerful little miss of eleven.

"Everything is nice and pleasant," laughed Aunt Prue, "sleighing just grand. We are going to have a lovely day."

"It looks to me very much like a storm. I hope we are not going to be snowed in."

"Never mind, Sarah, we can keep you if it does, and you can have a good rest," Mrs. Burton said pleasantly.

"Humph!" said Mrs. Carter. "You know, Bell, I am not one to fool around with trifles. I presume you are behind with your work, for you always make so much fuss over Christmas, and such foolishness for the children. I have told you a number of times that it is no way to bring them up. You all hung up your stockings, and how many dolls did you dress?"

"One for each of the children, and every stocking was full," Mrs. Burton answered with a smile.

"Christabel, will you bring my reticule? There, children, don't crowd close, and please not to chew candy right in my ear. I have brought each of you something. The girls and Ned are old enough to read something worth while." She handed Ned Pilgrim's Progress, a bible to each of her nieces, and a Sabbath-School book to the two little ones. They stood quietly with their gifts in hand, and thanked her as gravely as even she could wish, then walked away. Although it must be confessed that those two baby boys could hardly appreciate their biographies of impossibly good children who died young, and were, to say the least, very discouraging to pattern after. Mrs. Burton added her thanks, and looked after her little ones with fond eyes. They were disappointed, she knew, but, young as they were, they quietly accepted the situation.

Mr. Burton came in with Mr. Mills; introductions followed, and the conversation became general.

"Mamma," said Madie, as she was setting the table, "have you thought yet what I could give Mr. Mills?"

"Couldn't you give him the Bible you found in your stocking. You have two now, thanks to Aunt Sarah."

"If you don't think Santa Claus would mind, I believe that would be splendid! I guess I had better wait until just before he goes home; I don't want to give it before them all."

"You may do as you please, Madie. Dinner is ready and my little daughter has been a great deal of help to me to-day."

It was a regular old-fashioned Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner combined. Mr. Mills thought, as he glanced around, that it was good to enjoy this home, and, although it was hedged in on both sides by his dreary boarding life, yet he "roamed in green pastures" for this one day.

"Yes," said Mr. Burton, continuing the topic under discussion, "it does look rather badly down South, but Buchanan has been a little easy; when Lincoln takes his seat it will all quiet down."

"I wish that I could think so. I am very much afraid that those states will all break away from us, and that we will soon be in the midst of a civil war," said his brother thoughtfully.

"Pshaw, Ben, how you talk!" laughed his wife. "They are only a little hot-headed; you'll find they'll be glad enough to stay and be friends. Of course they'll not fight, that would be too dreadful. Your turkey is splendid, Bell! Let us leave off talking about Dixie."

"Prue will never think seriously! What she doesn't want to happen, she is sure will not. For my part, I believe in being prepared for the worst."

"Then, Sarah, it will all be worst. If you both expect it, and get it, I'd like to know where the good is to come in. How nice your preserves keep, Bell. Half and half is the only safe way to put them up," and Aunt Prue smiled as complacently as ever.

"I can't forget old John Brown. Something will yet come of his martyrdom, I firmly believe." Mr. Mills looked at Mrs. Burton as he spoke, as if he were claiming sympathy in her motherly heart for the grand, old, mistaken man.

"Yes, the day he was hung was one of the saddest of my life."

"No need to have been such a fool, then."

"I think, Mrs. Carter, that through such 'fools' as he, the greatest reforms have rolled over the earth." Mr. Mills spoke slowly, with flushed cheeks, for he was young enough to be startled by his own ideas, when expressed before elders.

"Madie spelled the school down yesterday, and the word was finale. I think we had better wait and see what that word will mean to us as applied to this cause. Perhaps ere another year has gone, we will know," said Mrs. Burton, as they arose from the table.

"Ned," said the teacher, "I promised the children to look at Madie's property, shall we go now?"

"Certainly, and my cousins would like to go, also." So the young people proceeded to the farm.

"She is very pretty. Are you the only property owner, Madie?" but the little girl had already returned to the house.

"Oh, no," replied Mr. Burton, who had just entered. "The children claim everything here; lambs, pigs, calves and colts. I keep the farm, but the rest is all promised."

"I am afraid you are going to see grieved faces sometime, because of this giving," thought the young man.

"I hope it won't storm," said Ned, looking up at the quiet gray sky. "I want to go coasting, and have the girls go with me, no matter if it does shock Aunt Sarah."

"She is a widow, is she not?"

"Yes, she did not marry until about five years ago. Her husband has been dead two years,—a goodish sort of a man; she ordered him around just as she pleased. I feel as if I'd like to congratulate him on getting away from

her." Mr. Mills smiled slightly, and seeing Madie coming toward him, stopped and waited for her.

"I had to help with the dishes. I wanted to speak to you; I wanted to make you a present. You see, I didn't think about it quick enough to get anything else; but I do hope you'll like it!" and the child, completely overcome, thrust the little book, so filled with mystic words of love, and life, and comfort, into his hands, and ran away. The day was dark; but something deeper and damper than shadows crept into the young man's eyes, and prevented him from seeing the little volume.

He turned the leaves slowly and tenderly, then went straight to the house, where Madie had beaten such a hasty retreat. "Little sister," laying his hand caressingly on the brown curls, "you have made me very glad and thankful. I have something to keep always, but you have no idea how selfish I am growing under this new kindness. I want one thing more, and I trust your mamma will not refuse me that, a picture like the one you gave her."

"Why, of course, won't you, mamma? We have one we were going to send to my cousins in New York; Aunt Sarah is going there in the spring, but they will not mind, or we can get another."

"I think you can let your teacher have the extra," said Mrs. Burton, smiling at her eagerness.

"Thank you! I have had a grand day of 'peace and good will.'"

In a short time the visitors departed, and the children went for an hour's sport with their sleds, returning flushed and happy, having had, to quote from Christabel, "Just the splendoriest time!"

"We can't have any story-time to-night," said Madie with a tired but happy little sigh. "I've had such a lovely day that I can almost think one myself. Mr. Mills said that if you watch the year out, and just at midnight, open your Bible, the verse you find there will be your text for the year. Isn't that nice? I am going to try it. May be it will be something I

can't understand, but he said he would explain it if he could."

"Let us all try it, Aunt Bell," coaxed Ned; "if Mills will come, he is a first-rate fellow, and did not seem a bit stilted to-day." Aunt Bell only smiled, but they understood that they were to have a watch-meeting.

"I wish we could have Christmas for a week!" moaned Bert, as he trudged up-stairs to bed.

CHAPTER III.

TEXTS AND MEANINGS.

The last day of the year came. Christa was full of importance, as she was to give the invitation to Mr. Mills, and delegated herself as guide.

The story that night Mrs. Burton intended to omit, but Mr. Mills seconded the invitation of the children warmly, adding, in an undertone, "Tell something to help me; I am selfish, to-night. This is my first watch-meeting since mother died, and left me, a boy of ten years, alone in the world."

Mr. Burton was engrossed with his paper, but the others were eager listeners. She told the story of a struggling orphan boy, of the careless sympathy of strangers, of his fight with poverty, and effort to finish college; told it in her tender, motherly way, and added: "But he conquered, for every day there was sunshine, though sometimes he failed to see it. Success crowned his efforts, loved ones surrounded him. In after years he came to know what home really meant, a man's work awaited him; brave, tender and an earnest Christian, what more could he wish?"

"Nothing," answered the young man, and she was repaid.

88 The little ones were put to bed, and Mrs. Burton and the older ones talked and sang until the hour drew near midnight. "Now the Bible," said Ned.

88 "All of you use mine. I should like to remember to-night in this way." The teacher drew Madie's gift from his pocket as he spoke. "Mrs. Burton, you first—but hark!" The clock was striking twelve, and with bowed heads they waited until the New Year was fairly upon them.

Silently and reverently she took the book, and opening,

read: " 'Whosoever will receive one of such children in my name receiveth me, and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but Him that sent me.' "

" A tribute to your grand, motherly nature," said Mr. Mills softly. " Ned! "

The boy's face was graver than usual. " The man is coming," thought Aunt Bell, as she looked at him.

" 'Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies. Thy right hand shall find out all those that hate thee.' That means war! " said Ned.

" It means bravery and trust, I hope," said the teacher. But Aunt Bell was silent; the man was nearer than she knew. Mr. Mills read slowly: " 'A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it; whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.' My dear little friend, I receive a beautiful promise with your gift. Will you read now? " The grave faces around her awed the child; she shook her head solemnly. " Let me try," and he read: " 'So the last shall be the first, and the first last; for many be called but few chosen.' "

" I am afraid I don't understand. Does it mean that I shall amount to something by and by? "

" I think you have expressed it, Madie, and I hope you may have many long, happy years to study it out in. It is '61 now, and I wish all a glad Happy New Year," said Mrs. Burton.

" What were you doing, Bell? " her husband enquired, when she joined him a few moments later.

" Finding texts for the new year," and she repeated them. " My text seems peculiarly applicable to Mr. Mills, perhaps it is for me to help him. "

" I wonder if he would not like to stay and help on the farm. He could study from the time school closes until spring's work begins. "

" Frank, as Christa says, that would be 'just the splendidest thing.' I wish you a Happy New Year. "

" It will be that, with you and the children near, Bell; " and Bell, being a loving woman, was satisfied.

The remaining days of that winter term were filled with

study and preparation. "The children are anxious for an exhibition. If they will do just as well with their studies, I do not object," Mr. Mills remarked, to one of the "district fathers."

On that night each had some part to perform. Ned delivered an oration that would have done honor to one of more mature years. Madie listening admiringly, whispered to Aggie that "there was not another boy in school who could do as well."

The remark was an unfortunate one, as Aggie's brother Robert was without a peer, in the opinion of his little sister. "I know ever so many who can do a great deal better than that!" Aggie flounced away, and laughed and talked to Ella Brown, and told her all the little confidences Madie had given her.

"Never mind, Mai," said her cousin Phil, who was out from the city, "be careful after this how you distribute secrets, a good many people have no place to put them."

Madie recited a poem, from the *Little Pilgrim*. Mr. Phelps, the rich man of the place, cheered heartily, and turning to Mr. Burton, said: "You must educate that girl."

"I shall try," he replied.

Mr. Mills, we shall call him Ralph now, gladly accepted the proffered situation, and became an inmate of the Burton household. The evenings passed in study, and the "story hour" was kept as usual. The kind lady of the house taking advantage of that hour to give the youths many a loving hint.

"She teaches so much, and doesn't seem to preach at all," Ralph confessed to Ned, after an unusually entertaining evening.

"Yes, Ralph, all my life I shall remember and profit by Aunt Bell's sweet story times."

Lincoln entered the White House. The Southern horizon was darkening. Spring came and "worked her quiet will" on hill and dale.

Uncle Ben drove down from the city with the news. "They have fired Sumpter and there is a call for troops."

"I didn't think that they would do it," said Mr. Burton.

During those first days, the boys drew nearer together as if filled with some vague plan. Then Ralph seemed to avoid Ned; Mrs. Burton watched both, when unobserved, with a sad wistful look. Even Aunt Prue grew sober, but when she saw the solemn faces of the others, would say cheerily: "Why, the call was only for three months. The boys will all be home again, soon."

News of preparation came to them, followed by the call: "three years or during the war," from the man who combined all the nobler qualities of ruler and subject, too.

"Aunt Bell, may I call you that just this once?"

"You may always call me that, Ralph."

"I want to talk with you. I must answer that call for help, and furnish one volunteer."

"Can you give up your college plans, Ralph?"

"What are my plans compared with those of a nation!" he exclaimed.

"I knew it was coming, yet it comes with a shock, after all."

"I must leave to-night. Ned must not know until I am gone. He would want to go too."

"He is too young, and I cannot spare both my boys, Ralph; it is so hard to let you go!"

There was no story that night. The children were silent on hearing the dreadful war news.

When the little ones had gone to bed, Ralph bade his friends good-by, and started for the city. He had reached the school house, and paused to give one last look at the place, grown so dear to him. "I shall remember it always," he murmured.

"So shall I," a voice repeated near him.

"Why, Ned. What are you here for?"

"I might play Yankee and answer your question by asking another; but I can tell you better than that, I am going with you."

"Ned, you are too young. Your relatives will miss you so! I beg of you to go back."

"I tell you, I will not; you are only two years older than I."

"Then go back and tell them. Do not steal away in the night. Why did you do this?"

"Because I thought to get away and leave you here."

"My plan, exactly, in regard to you." They both laughed, but there was little merriment in their laughter.

"Let us both go back and start to-morrow with their blessing. There will be a recruiting officer at this school-house to-morrow night," said Ralph.

Mr. Burton was greatly astonished, when the two boys entered the house together. The surprise increased, when he learned why Ralph had returned. With the quick intuition of her sex, his wife understood it all.

"The man is here! God help us all!" she said with a sob.

"Don't, Aunt Bell! I knew the sight of you would break me all up."

She had dropped upon her knees ere he finished, and the two knelt beside her. He, who knoweth all, heard the silent prayer from those loyal hearts.

The next day passed swiftly away, and evening came, "Give us a swing, won't you, please?" called the little girls. Under the oak trees they stand together, just at sunset, Madie and Christa, swinging back and forth, enjoying the swaying motion, and the balmy air.

The woman in the door way watched them with sad eyes. Madie called to them to "let the old cat die," and ran to her mother. "What is it, mamma?" But the only reply was a shake of the head. "I know, those boys are going to enlist!" and, turning, suddenly she rushed down the green lawn, under the whispering branches, and threw herself into Ned's arms.

"Oh, boys, don't go! Whatever shall we do! I just love you both! You aren't old enough!"

They were only boys after all; and Madie was not weeping alone.

"Little girlie," said Ralph, when he could speak, "Will you be my brave little sister, and wish us God speed?"

"You must be brave for mamma's sake," said Ned, with a sob, as he laid his brown cheek on the little hands holding his so tightly. The child stifled her sobs for the sake of the others. In after years, when they had learned of her brave, unselfish spirit, they tenderly remembered this first brave effort.

The sun shone as brightly the next morning as if there were never a clouded home in all the land. Duties must be attended to, though hearts should break!

In a few days they visited the camp; the young soldiers were resplendent in new uniform.

They stayed to see the dress parade. Bert clung to his father's hand and kept time to the music. Madie and Christa glanced down the line, but looked longest at the faces they knew so well. While the soldiers carried the memory of those childish faces through all those weary marches.

The proud young officers and private soldiers, standing on that slope of land, with the purple gleam of sunset lighting their earnest faces, and the lake and city in the near distance, will ever live in our recollections of childhood, the war, and old Camp Randall.

"We shall be under marching orders very soon; see my talisman of victory!" Ralph exhibited the little Bible and her miniature to Madie as he spoke.

"Well I declare! Christa's round, Dutch face is drawn into quite a respectable length," said Ned, with an attempt at cheerfulness. But when they left them at the gate the smile was gone.

Only a little time and they were ordered South. Then began soldier life in earnest. The children haunted the postoffice, and every bit of news that could be gleaned from the Army of the Potomac was eagerly sought. The letters were read and re-read. The children never failing to send their weekly budget. Our soldiers were glad to hear of every animal on the farm at the North. Philip's and Mills' letters were listened to by half the company. If there were a soldier homesick and lonely, in some wonderful way Mrs. Burton learned his name, and a letter

from the breezy old farm-house soon found its way to the seat of war.

"Just killing yourself writing to everyone! What good does it do?" fretted Aunt Sarah.

"It seems to me it would do a great deal of good, if I were worn and weary in a strange land, to get a letter from some one who loved me because I was fighting for her." Mrs. Carter vented her spite on her knitting, and said no more.

Phil, bemoaning the cruel fate that only permitted strong men to enter the army, spent his vacations on the farm.

Mrs. Burton refolded the letter she had been reading, which contained a description of a 'sharp skirmish.' "They will never be boys again, after all these months of danger. They are men in experience if not in years."

Benjie came close and put his chubby arms around her neck. "Dear mamma, don't go to mournfulling so! I love you! I idolize you! I worship you! I adore you! and that's all there is to me."

"Mamma ought to be brave when she has such a sweet comforter. See! the children are coming from school. Would you like to run and meet them? Tell them to hurry, for I have an errand for them to do."

Off he ran as fast as his little, fat legs could carry him. "Childin' you must hurry, quicker'n noffin! mamma has a nerrand she wants you to get."

"You little sweet!" cried Madie. "Christa, let us make a chair." The little girls clasp hands and he rides proudly to the house.

"What is it, mamma?"

"I want my little girls to go over to Mrs. Lee's, and see if she can help me for a few days. I am not at all well, and I think she needs the work."

"I believe she does, mamma; Sada has only one dress to wear to school, and it is mended in lots of places. She says they haven't heard from her papa since the battle of Chancellorsville."

"His name does not appear in the paper, so there is

room for hope," said Mrs. Burton, as the children started off.

The little cabin was very quiet as the children approached. Impressed by the stillness, they went in slowly. Mrs. Lee sat in a low chair, with her baby in her arms. She turned her pale face to the children when they reached the door, and the expression there Madie never forgot. "Are you sick, Mrs. Lee? Let me take the baby."

The woman laid her head on the table and sobbed aloud. "I have a letter from Charlie's mess-mate and Charlie was shot on the battle-field." Sada, who had just reached home in time to hear her mother's words, turned with a loud cry, and left the house. Amy and the baby were too young to realize their loss, but seeing that something was wrong, joined in with their shrill screams.

Madie's tears fell fast. "I don't know what to say, only I am so sorry. Can't you come home with us? I am sure mamma would be glad to have you."

"No, dear, I must stay here to-night, any way. I can't leave the place yet. We were happy here before this dreadful war. Oh, why did I let him go?" her grief overpowering her again.

Madie bade them good night, and with her sister, started homeward. When they told their parents the sad news, Mrs. Burton turned to her husband. "Frank, couldn't we bring them home with us for a time?"

"As you please, Bell, but have a care for yourself."

"Are they all going to come and live with us?" asked Christa. "I'll have to write to the boys to-night."

"No, my little ones must go to bed, the sun left us quite a while ago."

"The night has crowded out the day," said Madie, with one of her swift, earnest glances.

The next morning, these good Samaritans visited the Lees and brought the sorrowing mother and her little ones home with them. "I do not know how to repay you. I will help you all I can, and perhaps after a time I can get a situation somewhere."

"Please, Mrs. Lee, not to speak of paying me; you would have done the same for me, had our positions been changed. I could not think of leaving you there alone," said Mrs. Burton.

"I have nothing but my two hands to support my children."

"Have faith, some way will be provided. Your children will be a comfort to you, and your husband was a man whose memory you may be proud of." Mrs. Burton took the baby in her arms. He looked up at her with eyes whose chief expression was, "I wonder!" Satisfied with the face above him, he cooed contentedly; soon the blue eyes grew drowsy, and Harry was wandering through the valley of dreamland.

Mr. Burton came home with news that they were crowding up to the "line," and there was danger of a hard fight. Madie went after the cows that night, and going up to Star put her arms around the cow's neck and said, "Star, I am afraid there is going to be a battle. I don't dare cry before mamma and the others at the house. But, oh, my pet, what shall we do, if anything should happen to our boys?" Star rolled her great, calm eyes around and looked her sympathy. How many of us have found the love and protection of a dumb brute a comfort in time of trouble and danger!

"The aid society will meet with me this afternoon. We have our box almost ready to send. Would you like to be present, or would you rather stay away?"

Mrs. Lee looked from the window southward, then answered her hostess, "He gave up home and life, why should I not help? It will only be a widow's mite after all."

Those were strange sewing societies which met then, very little of neighborhood gossip, but very much conversation on that land that had so long been called the "Sunny South." Kindly glances and words of sympathy were given, the pale, little woman who had lost her husband. A quiet person, unknown to many outside her own family, where she had wielded a powerful influence over the gallant soldier now sleeping so far away. The bond of

sympathy drew those women together. Each had some near one fighting to save the nation, and many a heart had already been wrung.

"The Governor's wife will speak to us in a few days; she has been South, and can tell us better what to do," the president of the society said. The box was packed and the unfinished work gathered together, when they were startled by that dull, booming sound that all had come to know so well.

"It must be another battle!"

"I am afraid it is near the Potomac."

"I believe I shall stifle."

"Come out into the air!" With frightened, anxious faces they went out doors. Mr. Brown drove up from the postoffice. "What is it?"

He briefly answered, "Battle of Gettysburg, three days' fight, Lee is driven back." No other word was said. The Army of the Potomac held the company that was enlisted from this place, and to this group listening to the dreadful news, that company was the Army of the Potomac.

Glancing down the long list of names, wounded: Ralph Mills, William Brown, Edwin Philips, with a quick sharp moan Madie read the names, as she was returning from the postoffice. She went home and straight to her mother, "Mamma, something has happened. They are not dead, only wounded," she said, trying bravely to break the news gently. Mrs. Burton remembered sadly, Madie's words of a few days before, "The night had crowded out the day," for so many.

"Don't, Aunt Bell! I can't bear to see you look so troubled. You will hear from them in a short time, I am sure," said Phil, trying to console her.

"I am weak to-night, you must bear with me, to-morrow I will be brave. Mrs. Lee, it is a comfort to have you here."

"Thank you! I am glad to be of service."

They wrote for definite news, and then—waited.

CHAPTER IV.

STAR.

The Governor's wife addressed the people, urging the need of aid in camp and hospital. Madie was stirred by the brave, tender words of the loyal woman. "I wish I could do something to help them myself!"

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Burton: I'll give you fifty dollars for that young cow of yours," she overheard Mr. Brown saying to her father, as they were going home.

"I believe I might as well do it. My elder daughter thinks a great deal of her, but I want to help the cause along with money, if I can not with my own right hand."

The "elder daughter" heard every word. Her heart gave a great bound. "Going to sell Star! He shall not, he gave her to me." She rushed homeward. "Mamma," she cried, "papa is going to sell Star to Mr. Brown. He can't, can he? Isn't she my very own?"

"I don't know, dear! Papa will be home in a moment, and then we will see." Mr. Burton entered the room.

"Why Madeline, what is the matter?" But the child was sobbing beyond all power of self-control.

Mrs. Burton explained to him; lowering her voice, she said, "I was afraid, Frank, that your lavish bestowal of gifts would cause a commotion in our family some time."

With a feeling of almost guilt, he went over to Madie. "My dear, I never dreamed that you thought Star belonged to you, only so long as I chose to keep her. I gave you children, colts, and calves, and lambs, because you seemed pleased with them. I have bounty taxes and other expenses to meet, and I must part with some of the stock. I will give you another calf."

"It won't be Star and I don't want it. I thought Star was my own, and I have told her everything! Ralph and Ned are gone, and now she is going."

"You can have Coley's colt."

Mrs. Burton held up her hand warningly.

"No," said Madie. "I don't want to have anything for a little while, and then have it taken away from me."

"Very well," said her father coldly. For, man-like, he could not see why she should make such an ado over it. "We will keep the cow. I can possibly spare ten dollars, and that will have to do."

"Papa, I'll go without anything new—toys, and clothes, and all—for a year. And I will not think of Christmas at all, if you will let me keep my dear Star."

"You may keep her. Good night."

She lay for a long time looking at the stars, and thinking of her dumb friend. "I wanted to help the poor soldiers, and now, when I have a chance, I don't do it." There was a battle fought a long way north of "Mason's and Dixon's line" that night, but it was fought for principle, and loyalty and love conquered.

Mr. Brown came the next morning. He was met by Mr. Burton, with the information that he had changed his mind. "I will not sell my cow. Please hand this bill to your wife. I wish it were more, but times are hard, and I have to meet the wants of my family." The neighbor was turning away, when a little figure came flying down the walk.

"Mr. Brown, please wait a minute! Papa will not sell Star, because I claim her. I thought I couldn't let her go; but if you will be good to her and not sell her until I can earn money to buy her back, you can have her." The old man looked at her kindly, but hesitated to speak.

"Go to school, Madeline, I will not take your pet away from you."

"No, papa, I want you to sell her. Ralph and Ned may be wanting something now, and there are other little girls whose people are down there. I will give Star to them all."

The cow had a mind of her own and would not be caught.

"Just stand still and call her by name and she'll come. Now, will you please go away and let me say good by to

her?" They left them on the sunny slope of pasture land. The cow tossed her horns as if she were to suffer a great indignity. "Good by, darling; I wouldn't let you go, if it were not for all the boys down South. It is all we can do to help them. You are going away and I'll never see you again, because I will not want to see you, when you do not belong to me. I'll get big and teach school and buy you back some time; so please don't get homesick and die." Star rubbed her nose against Madie's hand and looked at her as if she knew that this were a parting. Then they came and drove her off.

Phil and Christa went alone for the cows that night. When the house was still, the sound of a familiar moo came to the girls' room. "What is that?" enquired Sada, raising herself upon her elbow.

They heard it again. "That is Star!" cried Madie, and ran down stairs. "Papa, get up, quick, my cow has come back!"

"I think not." But in the barnyard they found the creature.

"I wish I could sleep out here with her."

"Why, Madeline, the idea. Come into the house!" and Madie went.

"She will change her mind in the morning," Mr. Burton said, after he had told his wife about it.

"We shall see," was her reply.

Madie did not venture near the yard the next morning. When the children started for school, the older people who were furtively watching, saw her turn away from the barn and take the opposite side of the road.

During the forenoon, Star's new owner came for her, his hired man was with him. The cow had no idea of leaving the old farm, and darted here and there around the pasture. Madie saw it all from the school-room window; she went to the teacher's desk.

"May I go home?"

"Are you sick?"

"No, ma'am."

"Do your people want you?"

"No, ma'am."

"I cannot dismiss you then."

"But, you see they are trying to catch my cow, and I shall have to go."

"Take your seat."

She obeyed, but one glance from the window revealed the still fruitless chase. With an agonized look at her teacher, she said, "*I must go, please!*" and left the room.

She reached the field as the man was about to throw a stone. "Don't you dare!" she cried, as she caught his arm. Her father looked at her in astonishment; he had never seen her so aroused. "Give me the rope. Come, Star!" in her clear voice, and with a bawl of delight, the cow came to her little mistress. "Oh, my darling!" but she bravely slipped the rope over her horns. Mr. Brown came up to her.

"Madie, it is too bad. I had better leave her here with you."

"No, sir. I want you to take her; but don't let her come back again."

Madie never owned another cow. She never forgot her pet, nor the grief of a child who learned that gifts meant nothing. When she had children of her own, they were not misled by rash promises. Mr. Burton, too, learned a lesson; he was more judicious with his presents, but they *were presents* and not idle words.

"Send the fifty dollars in Madie's name; it is hers," he said. So this child laid the five bank notes on the altar of her country.

CHAPTER V.

ACROSS THE LINE.

The long brigades were moving across the line into Pennsylvania. Winding along that upland country, the brave Army of the Potomac went. They had met many discouraging events, but they were accustomed to "moving firmly onward in the path of duty, even when that path was not irradiated by the sunshine of hope." The eye of a nation was watching their movements during those June days.

"It seems nice to be in a real free state once more; I honestly believe I can breathe better here," said Will Brown to Ned Philips.

Ned tossed back the curls from his forehead and drew a deep breath as if he, too, enjoyed the free air.

"We shall meet them soon," said one and another, almost joyously, "and we will be victorious."

"Ned, I want to talk with you for a little while. We shall go into battle very soon; perhaps I may be shot; if I am, will you take the little I have and send it to Madie? She is only a child, but she has been more to me than all the others. Your Aunt Bell has been motherly and kind, and you have been a brother and comrade, but Madie's words, while there, and her sweet, childish letters to me here, have made me brave and hopeful. Tell her, if it should happen, that I carried her little Bible to the last.

Ned pressed Ralph's hand in token of silent assent. "My property belongs to Aunt Bell. I can't say it, but you know and will tell it all, if I should be the one to go."

"Yes, Ned," and again they shook hands to seal the compact.

They were fighting at Gettysburg. Through, over and around that Pennsylvania village rolled the grim tide of

battle. Poets and historians have described it to us, and in scenic panorama much of its horror stands before us to-day.

The first day of the battle, the Iron Brigade was in the thickest of the fight. One of the Badger State Regiments missed the brave young Colonel, whose *hand* had not only been pledged, but on this day was given for Freedom. Many of them well remembered his earnest words of two years before. "Boys, come on! our country needs us! I am going!" And they thanked God that the loyal heart still beat on, and the life was spared.

Driven back to the old cemetery, they held their position, looking out through the fire and smoke, while the hours of agony throbbed on.

Ralph and Ned were fighting side by side. Just before the glad shout of victory came, Ralph fell suddenly. Ned bent over him. "What is it, old fellow?" But there was no time to indulge in a personal grief. Another ball sung its death song through the air, and the two friends were lying near each other on the bullet-furrowed ground.

Not until the next day—the anniversary of our Nation's Independence—were the wounded all cared for.

"Here! I want some help," the surgeon said to his assistant.

"It isn't so bad a case as I thought," he added. "I was afraid the ball had lodged in his side; but it is only a flesh wound. Strange, that it was turned aside in that way!"

"Look here, sir;" as he spoke, the assistant held up a small pocket Bible, with a bullet hole through it, and a miniature with a dented case. The little girl looked smilingly out at them.

"Well, well, love or religion kept that ball from his heart! Put it back," and the busy surgeon hurried on to the next sufferer.

Ned and Will Brown were only slightly injured, and were cheered by the knowledge that the Army of the Potomac had at last won a grand victory.

Letters were sent North, and army life began again, for

all except the seriously wounded and those who had "gone over to the silent majority." Ralph recovered slowly; then came glad news of a furlough.

Madie had been for the mail that golden August day; coming slowly into the kitchen, she called out, "It is just eight hundred and fifty steps from here to the corner of the south lot! I"—she stopped suddenly, for there was a queer, glad smile on her mother's face.

Bert came bounding toward her from the parlor. "I never'll tell in my life. Somebody's here, though, and he is going to stay fifteen days."

"And he ain't teached for a long time. He comed from the horspittul and I sha'n't tell, neither," cried Benjie, eager to have his say.

"Guess, Madie!" laughed Christa. But they had no audience. Madie was in the parlor, crying and laughing a welcome to the pale, young soldier.

"She never guessed at all; she just up and peaked the first thing," said Bert, in an injured tone.

How rapidly the two weeks passed away. "Fifteen days is a good deal shorter than I thought it was," said Benjie, twisting around on the arm of Ralph's chair.

"You could almost see the time go," Bert said mournfully.

"Right, boys; but it has been long enough to almost spoil me. All my favorite dishes cooked, all of you to wait upon and entertain me. I have been the sovereign before which you have all bowed. I shall have much to tell when I get back to camp."

Turning to Madie, he continued, "I shall tell of Star and your sacrifice, and I shall carry the riddled volume with me always. 'Whither soever it turneth, it prospereth.'" The tears sprang to the little girl's eyes, but she could not answer.

"What is it, Mrs. Lee?"

The two mothers had been in consultation, and the widow came alone to Ralph as she answered, "I am going

South with you to-morrow. My work is in the hospital." Noting the firm mouth and earnest eye, no one opposed. "It is very hard to leave the children, but it seems as if it would bring Charlie nearer to me. The work lay so near to his heart, I would like to do what I could." As she looked at her little ones, the mother heart conquered all other feeling for a time.

Mrs. Burton divined her sorrow, and laid her hand gently on her arm. "My dear friend, I will do all in my power for your children. If you can bravely go into the midst of all that suffering, I can surely find it in my province to take care of these little ones."

"I know, and I think, Mrs. Burton, that this was given you and I to do. If I were to stay, there would be still another here. You can care for my girls and boy better than I can. May God keep us all safe!"

Many a soldier in that Southern hospital blessed the tender, patient little woman, who was trying to carry on, in her weak way, the work her husband so bravely began.

But one day, after nearly two years of patient working and waiting, and just before the "glad tidings of great joy" told that peace was declared, a letter came from Ned to his aunt, telling her that the children were orphans. Mrs. Lee had died of fever.

Sada, Amy, and little Harry stayed on at the old farmhouse, tenderly, tearfully remembering the brave father and mother, reunited once more.

CHAPTER VI.

PLANS AND PARTINGS

It is summer again. The army is disbanded. Young and old go out to meet them. Our heroes are again at home.

"They are as handsome as they can be," said Bert, and Benjie, with mouth too full for utterance, nods his head.

"We've got an awful family, but I guess we can manage," was Christa's comforting conclusion.

"What is this?" cried Benjie, drawing a case from Ned's pocket.

"Oh, that is nothing at all," Ned answered, returning it to his pocket, a bit of color showing even through the tan on his cheek as he caught Sada's quiet glance.

"Ned thinks a great deal of that picture," said Ralph.

"Madie's got a gerentype, too," said Harry Lee.

"Where is it?" both soldiers enquired.

"On the mantel."

Madie handed it to them. They started. One of these was not a blue-coat, surely. "Where did you get it?" but she had left the room.

Mrs. Burton answered for her. "We visited the camp last fall, and saw the rebel prisoners who had been brought North. Madie went back of her own accord to wish them a Merry Christmas. One of them took her by the hand and asked her why she said that; she answered: 'because every one ought to be kind and have as nice a time as he can on that day, and give gifts to each other, for Christ was given to the world on Christmas, I think. Mamma told me that was the reason.' The man smiled and told her he would like to give her something. He looked very ill. Madie took some jelly and a few other delicacies to them. This man did not live long after that. He left a letter and this locket for her. The let-

ter stated that he was an orphan. He went from a loyal state, but his wife sympathized with the South. She died soon after he was sent North. His only brother was chaplain of a New York regiment. Madie was not bold, she was simply self-forgetful. His brother has a mate to this locket, he said."

"Things happen strangely in this world," said Ralph, but how strange this was all to be, none of them could know.

"How beautiful everything is, and how nice it is to be with you all," said Ned, the next morning.

"I am so happy to have you home again, that I feel as Madie expressed herself last night."

"How was that, Auntie?"

"She came to me after you had retired, and said 'Mamma, I'm so happy that it hurts me.'"

"She is a sweet little girl," said Ned warmly.

"You have grown ever so much," said Christa. "See, there are your marks by the woodshed door. Don't you remember, we all measured before you went away?"

"The notches are beneath our notice now," said Ralph merrily.

"Breakfast is ready," called Benjie. He had asked so many questions about the returned soldiers. "When are they going back? Be they going to stay with us all summer? and what relation is both of 'em to the whole of us?" that Mrs. Burton and Sada were glad to send him on this errand in order to give themselves a brief rest.

"This is most as nice as Christmas," said Bert, beaming on the large family with the utmost satisfaction.

"That is the acme of Bert's idea of happiness."

"I believe it is of mine, Aunt Bell. Ralph and I have kept four anniversaries alone."

"But we found the 'finale,' Mr. Burton," said Ralph.

"I little thought that it would be such a bloody lesson," was the grave reply.

"Let us not talk of that," said Ned, seeing the sudden pallor on Sada's face. "Phil, what has become of Aunt Sarah?"

"She has been away nearly as long as you have, at Uncle Joe's in New York. She is coming back next week, and we expect a regular *jolly* time."

"Phil, you must remember that she is your father's sister," said his aunt reprovingly.

"Boys—somehow you are still boys to me—you can find pleasure in any way you see fit," said Mr. Burton. "You surely ought to enjoy a good, long, pleasant rest; so roam about as you please."

"We have roamed enough, and are going to help with the work," said Ralph decidedly.

"Put on your old clothes, then," commanded Phil. Up in the garret they found the suits they had left when they marched away, but the clothes belonged to boys of sixteen and eighteen, and did not fit the men at all.

"Why, they've growed up and didn't know it," said Bert.

"We've worn our uniforms in hotter places than a harvest-field," said Ned, as he came down stairs. Phil keeps as close to each as he can, intensely interested in what they have to tell. While the little boys follow them with wondering eyes.

"We will never be thought any more of than we are to-day. See Aunt Bell and the girls come to the door every few minutes as if they were afraid that we would disappear."

"If you were not looking that way yourself, Ned, you would not be aware of the fact," laughed Ralph. Ned was too happy to even care to reply.

That night the boys related incidents of camp life to the group of listeners on the piazza, while the moon trailed her silver light over the white harvest fields.

"Where is Phil?" Ned enquired.

"Over to Mr. Peyton's, I presume. He and Aggie are fast friends."

"So we are," said Phil, coming around the house just as Sada finished speaking. "Aggie has real good sense, and you can tell all your plans to her without being laughed at. They are all so glad to have Robert back,

that they can not see anyone else, and I came back to find some more blue-coats crowding me out again. You see, as long as I live, I shall be ridiculed, and despised, because I was not old enough to enlist. I must get back and go to work. I don't want to make life a complete failure on account of my youngness."

"We will have Robert and Aggie Peyton and Will Brown here some evening before you go," said Aunt Bell, thinking of the happiness of all.

The young people's tea was a pleasant affair. "Dear me!" said Mrs. Burton between laughter and tears. "I almost thought it was a children's party and had a mind to make turnovers and jumbles, and here are these youths, grown men, and have faced danger. Even Phil is a sophomore and is talking of a profession. Madie is almost fourteen. Frank, we must be growing old."

"So we are, Bell, but we are growing happier, too."

"What is the matter, Amy, are you tired so soon?"

"I am dizzy, and my head hurts a little" They had been playing with grace hoops. Amy always enjoyed the game, but to-night she left them, and went to Mrs. Burton, who bathed her head and sang to her, until she fell asleep.

The next day Phil's parents came, bringing Mrs. Carter with them. The older children, remembering their cynical relative, did not exhibit a great deal of enthusiasm at the meeting. "There, children, Prue will kiss you all; she seems to enjoy it. I don't care to indulge! Mr. Mills, how do you do? I see you are back again. Edwin, you have grown some, but I should have known you any where, although you are both as brown as Indians."

"Yes, we have been out of doors quite a good deal in the last four years," Ned dryly replied.

Aunt Prue heard both remarks. "Bless me! so you have, boys. But you did good work, and I am proud of you."

"Mrs. Carter has not changed," said Ralph.

"Aunt Sarah is sharp to everyone. She judges

harshly. Every person is bad, either boldly or slyly," said Phil.

"Does she think so of herself?"

"No, indeed! She is a stanch church-woman, and is on the right road. The rest of us are wrong."

"How can she be a Christian and think that way of the world! Are you not mistaken?"

"She will be greatly surprised, if she doesn't get through all right, for she has made all sorts of calculations on it. If she is correct in her surmises, she will have it pretty much her own way, as she will be very nearly alone."

"Philip Burton," cried Ned, catching him by the shoulder, "you ought to be ashamed of talking about Aunt Sarah in that way! It isn't nice at all. I do not believe in speaking unkindly of people."

The hot blood mounted to Phil's face. "Aunt Sarah is good enough. I only told her characteristics. I didn't say whether I liked them or not. I merely gave Ralph to understand that she expected to give in a minority report of goodness, with herself as chairman and committee." There was a saucy gleam in his eye when he finished.

"She is good hearted," said Ned.

"Pshaw, I don't think that is a compliment! When one person has abused another all he can, he usually ends up with, rather good hearted, though." I just as soon a person should not call me that. It has come to be an apologetic term for a fool." Then these three young men laughed in concert.

Mrs. Carter entertained them with encomiums upon "My Niece, Hattie"—a girl a few years older than Madie, whose originality of thought and character was completely destroyed by the dictates of fashion. "Hattie busies herself all the time with something. She has just completed a beautiful altar cloth for our church. Madeline what have you done since I went away?"

"I have been busy most of the time, and have tried to help mamma. But I can't think, now, of a single bit of work that I have done," she answered confusedly.

"A girl who cannot account for time spent better than that must not expect any of my property."

"Let her keep it," Phil whispered.

While Christa, on the other side, gave her hand a little squeeze and said, "Don't feel badly! We can manage."

That evening, into one of the blissful quiet, that often falls on a united company, Mrs. Carter entered abruptly. "Well, I suppose you have decided on something to do?"

"There, Sarah, they haven't been home long enough. They will surely want a little rest after all they have been through," said Aunt Prue.

Mrs. Burton, holding Amy in her arms, thought, "It is too bad, after having so much of their youth taken from them, that they cannot pleasure one little week."

Ralph was the first to answer: "I shall enter college this fall, and, if I have not forgotten too much, shall fit myself to teach."

"I shall keep with Ralph at school, and shall finally study law," said Ned.

"They are going away again," sobbed Bert, and the other children joined in the outcry.

"I shall be a dentist and pull teeth, tongues, too," said Phil, in a savage undertone.

"Amy, dear, do you feel worse?" The child was moving restlessly. "Children, you must be quiet. We will keep Ralph and Ned for some time yet." Sada went over to her little sister. "She has a fever and her throat seems sore," said Mrs. Burton.

"They are having scarlet fever in the city," said Mrs. Carter.

"Don't mention it, Sarah," said good Prue, as she arose to go. "It isn't at all likely they'll have it out here."

The next morning Aunt Sarah's dark prophecy was realized; for a week they watched the little sufferer, and in the gloaming of the Sabbath she went away alone.

When all was over, Sada, who had watched beside her sister bravely and faithfully, went to Harry and attended to his wants. After he had gone to sleep, she passed the silent room, down to the lonely piazza. "Is every-

thing I love to be taken from me?" she cried out in her grief.

"I hope not, dear." Ned came from the shadow and stood beside her.

"I have only Harry left, and what if the fever should go through the house and take him and Bert and Benjie."

"Let us trust as Aunt Bell trusts. I can't comfort you, Sada, but I want you to know that I am sorry for you." He was wiping her tears away; Mrs. Burton, coming to the door just then, all at once understood something of the future of these two under her charge. Sada was weeping still, and she, with her heart full of anxiety for her own little ones, found, in that great, motherly heart, room for love and pity of this orphan girl. She soothed her with loving words. After she had seen her to her room and sleeping quietly, she went back to the others to note if there were any symptoms of the fever. Meeting Ned in the hall, she looked at him earnestly and said, "Be careful, my boy."

With a curious look, he answered, "Yes, until I get through school, but now and always I shall think the same."

The dread disease swept through the family, but little Amy was the only one taken from them. "How tired Aunt Bell looks," said Ralph, when the last patient was growing convalescent.

"I know it, and I have a plan to unfold. Call the girls, please," said Ned. When the plan was laid before the girls, all agreed that it would be grand to give the dear mother a rest. They told her that evening. "We want you to go East with Aunt Prue, and we'll all keep house together," said Ned eagerly.

"I don't see how I can leave," she said in a perplexed way. "It will be hard for these young girls to take mother's place."

"We can't take your place, but we will try to make the wheels run as smoothly as possible," said Sada, standing behind her chair and stroking the brown hair softly.

"Please go, mamma! We will miss you, but we will manage, somehow."

"How much Christa comprises in that one word 'manage.'" Mrs. Burton smiled as she spoke. "I don't see how I can afford it," she added doubtfully.

Mr. Burton had been an amused listener to the pleadings of the young people. He now brought forward his opinion to help her to decide. "I agree with Christabel, that we can manage."

"If you could go, too, Frank!"

"But I cannot at present."

"Please not to say any more! I feel homesick already." They were startled by a wail from the room above. A hurried pattering of little feet down the stairs. "Benjie, what is the matter?"

"This modder is going away, like my oder one did," sobbed Harry Lee, "and we can't 'manage' not a tall."

"Why, darling, I thought you were asleep!"

"I was asleep," he said, nestling close to Mrs. Burton, "but Benjie woked me."

"Why did you do that, Benjie?"

"Well, 'cause that stove-pipe hole you left last spring when you took the stove out, just leaked the words right through, and I woked Harry and told him there was going to be another dead one in this house, and we didn't neither one of us want it so, and we cried 'cause we couldn't help it." Both broke into another cry to emphasize the remarks.

They were comforted and sent back to bed, but the rest of the family were very careful of the "stove-pipe hole that leaked," for fear of another commotion.

The next morning, Mr. Benjamin Burton and family came out from the city. "We're taking you by storm this time," were Aunt Prue's first words.

"We're on business and might as well explain now as to joke about it. Ben and Prue are going with me to Joseph's next week, and if Bell can get ready and not take all the children, we want her to go too." Aunt

Sarah had reached the house and the end of her sentence at the same time.

"Just what we were talking about last night," said Ned. "I believe she will go."

Phil handed a letter to Sada that he had brought from the office. She took it and left the room; it was from her mother's sister. She opened it and read:

"MY DEAR NIECE AND NEPHEW:

I earnestly beg your pardon for my apparent neglect. I did not know that you were left entirely alone, until I received your letter telling of Amy's death. I hope you will give me a chance to redeem myself. I, too, have known deep grief. Both my boys were shot at Vicksburg. We had forgotten all others in our own great sorrow. My poor children, I want you to come to us. Perhaps we may comfort each other. Enclosed find sum for expenses. Please convey my thanks to your friends, such people reawaken one's faith in the world. Your uncle is too busy to write, but says: 'Tell them I shall be glad to welcome both, for the sake of the father and mother I loved so well.' Hoping to see you very soon, I am, your loving Aunt,
ELLEN GRENALL."

Sada read the letter again before she gathered all its meaning. "It almost breaks my heart to think of leaving, but this is what I ought to do," she thought, as she went down to the others, her new grief leaving a shadow on her pale face.

"Are you sick, dear?" Aunt Prue asked.

"No, ma'am; I've only been thinking and planning."

Aunt Bell, catching her wistful look, followed her to the kitchen. Sada quietly handed her the letter. She read it carefully. "This is a real kindly letter, and I am glad you have it; but remember, my child, that I want you to do as you wish. This is your home as long as you and Harry choose to stay. They may be able to do for you better than we can, yet what we have you are welcome to."

Sada could not answer, but went out down the path

through the orchard and over to the sunny slope where little Amy was resting for eternity. "Little sister, what shall I do?" and only the silence crept about her.

When she returned, she went to the younger ones, who were discussing the proposed visit. Carrie had lain aside her tatting and was speaking to the others. "I am going to stay with Mamie Lovell; Ray is going to board there. I don't know what Phil will do."

"I'll tell you," Phil answered for himself. "I'm going to stay on this very farm if father and Uncle Frank are agreed."

"That will be just grand, mamma *must* go," said Madie. "Let us hurry and get the work done, and talk it over all together."

No step was ever taken in that family unless it was first "talked about all together."

When the shadows, which marked the day's work as nearly done, lay across the lawn, they met to talk and plan. Mr. Burton began, "I particularly desire Bell to go with you on your trip. We can afford to have her go better than to stay and get sick as she surely will if she does not rest."

"Ben, Prue and I have decided already. I'll help Bell with her preparations," said Mrs. Carter promptly.

"I think we ought to listen to the younger ones now." Mrs. Burton glanced at each youthful face as she spoke.

"The others seem bashful, so I will speak for them," Phil explained. "We boys are going to college in a month, and I would like to stay here while Aunt Bell is away. I think my experience would be of great benefit to the young housekeepers. Carrie will stay at Mrs. Lovell's and will make clover-leaf and all kinds of tatting and crochet work, and will have a lovely time. She'll go to boarding school by and by, 'because every young lady does now-a-days, you know,'" with a sly glance at Aunt Sarah. He was the only one of the younger members of the family who did not stand in awe of his grim relative.

Mrs. Carter turned to Sada, who was holding Harry. "What do you intend to do?"

Sada looked quickly around the group, then, in a voice so low that only those nearest could hear, she said, "I must do what I can for myself and little brother. We have burdened our dear friends here long enough. I should like to be of some service to some one. My aunt has written me, I think she needs me, and her letter made me feel as if I needed her." She looked at Ned, who had turned from the group, and was pulling the leaves of the grape-vine to pieces.

"Dear, dear," sobbed Christa, "It seems as if I had something to cry for all the time." Madie had lain her head on Carrie's shoulder, and was crying bitterly.

"Mrs. Burton, please tell them that I must go, although I love you all so well; Aunt Ellen is my mother's oldest sister, and this is best for me to do. Ned, can't you help me?" Ned went over to her, and, taking Harry from her arms, carried him to the house; returning immediately, he found the girls had gone out under the trees together.

"Don't trouble her with useless questions and objections. The poor child has been tortured enough," he said gently.

"I think she had better go with us, and Harry will not then be such a trouble to her," Mrs. Burton suggested.

"Bell will go now. There will be a baby to care for," said Mrs. Carter.

"Mamma, what will we do without Sada?" asked Madie tearfully.

"My little daughter has been brave; will she try again?"

Madie's brown eyes met her mother's bravely. She was self-forgetful always. "Brave little sister," said Ralph; but cheerful, earnest Ned was silent; Mrs. Burton noted it and understood.

"If Madeline does this work, I believe I shall give her a piano." Aunt Sarah generously gave this provisional promise one day, when the preparations were nearly made. A glad light shown in Madie's eyes. Sada was very sober during those last days, but she had been walk-

ing in the shadow so long that she had grown accustomed to it, "and this," she said sadly, "is only one thing more." The little girls brought her many a girlish trifle as a parting keepsake. They would sit long together, and separate with a strange look on their young faces. There was a new tenderness in each voice when addressing either of those so soon to leave.

The trunks were packed, and Mr. Burton drove to the door. His wife bade her family a tender good by. Sada and her almost sisters sobbed their farewells, clinging close to one another; then little Harry was passed around and Ralph carried him to Mrs. Burton. Sada gave one last look from the window, toward the resting-place of her little sister. She turned to meet Ned's glance and outstretched hand. "Good by, dear," he said softly. "Don't forget, Sada, some time I shall come to you, so wait."

The deep gray eyes looked straight into his own. "I shall not forget, and shall try always to be what my dear friends wish me to be." He bent suddenly and kissed her once, but she went into the night alone.

Mrs. Carter had grown impatient at the delay, and in reply to her brother's query of "all ready?" said curtly, "No, but they will be in the course of a week or so."

"Bravo! Aunt Sarah, you are improving. I believe you could be trained to take a joke." She ignored Phil's remark.

"Where is that package I was going to take to Joseph; did you put it in the trunk, Madeline?"

"Oh, Aunt Sarah, I forgot it; I left it on the table, I think."

"A girl of fourteen, who cannot attend to matters better than that, can go without a piano." Madie had run errands and been generally useful all the week, but she had forgotten this last duty in the sadness of parting.

"Never mind, Madie, get it and mamma will put it in her valise," said Mrs. Burton soothingly.

They drove away, and Madie went out under her favorite elm tree, feeling lonely and sorrowful.

CHAPTER VII.

RUNNING FOR CONGRESS.

Phil went in search of his cousin. "Madie, where are you?"

"Here," answered a muffled voice.

He seated himself beside her. "You'll miss them, Mai, but Sada will come back sometime, and your mother will only be gone a little while."

"I know, Phil, but I've been thinking of Amy, and about their being gone, and you boys will go away in a month. I hope it isn't selfish, but I am disappointed about that piano. There are so many dreadful things to feel badly over."

"Well, little cousin, you might as well do up your fall crying now as any time, and when you've had a real good time feeling miserable, and cried for everything you've wanted to cry for, we'll go to the house." Madie smiled, but grew sober in a moment.

"There is no use in trying to avoid it, we are awfully poor; please not to mention it to the boys, but I believe it grows worse every day, although I try to help all I can. Aunt Sarah talks so much about Hattie; I wish I amounted to as much as she does."

"I'll tell you honestly, Mai, if I were a stranger I'd ask for an introduction to both of us before I would to her, for I believe we are better worth knowing. It may be that you are not destined to be rich; possibly 'fame is going to wreath your brow with laurels.' People of genius always have a fearful time. As likely as not you are a genius, but candidly, Mai, I never dreamed it."

"People are always far-sighted where genius is concerned; they never see one in their midst until someone from a distance points her out."

"That's so, Madie; I've often thought I might be a won-

der myself, but I'm willing to share honors with you." They started for the house, meeting Ned and Christa in the door. She had sought refuge in tears, and had been comforted by Ned; who had mastered his own feelings to help the others.

"So you've been in the moonlight building 'castles in the air,' and romancing. Well, children, you couldn't help it; it's a disease as sure to strike childhood and youth as the measles."

"And, like the measles, one may have it twice. It generally proves fatal the second time, so look out, Edwin," and Phil laughed mischievously.

"The world is always bright to the very youthful, so laugh away, my child," said Ned teasingly.

"Just what we intend to do. I know one man who never laughs, and it is about as comforting to look at him as at a smoked herring. It is ever so much better to laugh than to cry."

"I agree with you, Phil," said Ned cordially. "I want the girls to rest to-night, for to-morrow they begin work as housekeepers." He drew his cousins toward him and looked at them fondly.

Breakfast was an easy meal the next morning, as the thoughtful mother had left everything prepared. Ralph and Ned were praising Madie's effort, when Phil interposed, "Don't flatter her too much, she'll tire out; She's

'Not over fond of worruk;
'Tis the way with all the Bradys.'

Madie and Phil studied the cook-book. Sometimes the victuals were rare done, sometimes burned to a cinder. They steadily improved, however, and all were very lenient to the youthful cooks.

"I used to think housekeeping required no skill, but I have learned differently; I actually believe it takes genius." Phil made this remark to his cousins one evening as he was turning the bread in the oven.

There came a day before which the trials of all the other days vanished into insignificance. A convention to nominate delegates to send to the congressional conven-

tion, met at the school-house. Mr. Burton came in that morning looking perplexed.

"They have apportioned the delegates from abroad, among those here; as I am one, and live so near the school-house, I ought to take about six; could you get dinner for them?" he asked. No one replied for a moment. Ralph turned to Christa.

"Why don't you say 'we can manage?'"

"We will do the best we can, papa," said Madie.

"Let us take some out-door exercise. I feel the need of it," said Phil.

They were standing by the swing, when the primmest looking man they had ever seen, drove in the yard.

"May I enquire if this is Mr. Burton's residence?"

"Let him enquire as long as he pleases, but don't you dare tell him," muttered Phil, but Ralph had already answered.

"I was not positive whether I had followed directions implicitly or not."

They were in the kitchen staring helplessly at each other. "Talks in words of three syllables and uses conjunctions to join them," said Phil.

"Here is another reinforcement!" Ned cheerfully informed them. Madie wrung her hands, and stood speechless. "There is dinner, and there are those men," she finally gasped.

"Don't worry, we will get along all right," Ned promised hopefully. How they all worked that morning! Ralph acted as hostler and general out-door man, keeping the little boys with him. They had the table arranged an hour before time.

"Don't you think we had better get the flies out now?" Phil asked.

"Certainly," Ned agreed. While this work was being done, someone overturned the castor, the vinegar spread over the table-cloth. "Talk about everlasting influence. Look there," said Ned. The cloth had to be changed, but through it all they remained cheerful.

"If Ralph and Ned will only meet them and help through dinner," said Madie.

"Of course we will," they cheerfully promised.

"If it were only corned beef and beans we were going to have, we could see to the rations," said Ned.

"Those pies are made after the same receipt I used the other day, but they don't look half as well." Madie's voice was full of discouragement as she said this.

"You are getting to be a nice little cook. When you go to housekeeping I'll send you a library of cook-books," said Phil, with reckless generosity.

"Better send a hired girl for six months," Madie replied, a trifle petulantly.

"She reminds me, too," he went on, "of the man who had such an even temper, he was mad all the time."

"So would you, if"—she did not finish her sentence, the table-leaf was too heavily weighted and came down with a crash, carrying two of the three pies with it, and a pan of milk. "It is too late to make another pie." Madie tried to speak bravely, but the tears were very near.

"There is enough for the politicians and we'll do without. I never did care much for pie," said Ned, gathering up the debris.

"Nor I," said Phil, "especially this time of year."

"Here is half a pie saved," and Christa joyfully exhibited it. "It didn't overturn and you can have this for lunch."

Instead of six guests there were eight, "and that pie of only six pieces!" Madie's voice was full of tragedy, that tragedy whose reminiscence is always comedy, but which is pitifully real at the moment.

"Bring out the half that was left whole," were Ned's orders. "We can get three pieces out of this. Give one to Uncle Frank, and the others to the two men that look least hungry. I object to pie myself, on hygienic principles."

They came before they were ready for them, and Madie presided, as she afterward learned, with crock on her face and flour in her hair. "One man reminds me of the young lady in the reader. 'The only wonder is that one head can contain it all,'" Phil confided to Madie, while

industriously pouring coffee. "Hear the words come! he must have swallowed a dictionary and taken a slow emetic; he talks just as if the words were forced up."

"How shall I manage to get through with this dinner? Will it go off all right? Will they be here to supper?" Madie silently questioned Fortune, Fate or the Future. A gentleman spoke to her; she did not answer until recalled to the present by her father's glance, and answered "yes," at random.

"How those statesmen do eat," said Phil, as dish after dish came back to be replenished. "I'll keep you posted, Ned, if anything happens."

"All right! There was a man in the regiment who always told bad news as soon as he could. He said he wanted to get all the pleasure out of it possible."

It seemed to Madie, sitting at the head of the table and looking at those strange faces, as if she should die of mortification. When her father called for more potatoes, what should she say, the tears sprang to her eyes. Phil came bravely to the rescue. "Gentlemen, we are novices in housekeeping, and we never worked for the government before. We didn't know how many delegates we were elected for. We have an abundance of raw potatoes. My cousins and I will prepare them in any way you may desire, but our supply of cooked potatoes is exhausted. If my aunt had been here, this would not have happened. I am not very well posted myself, and my cousins are young."

The delegates laughed heartily at Phil's speech. "You have done splendidly," said each and all. Madie's happiest moment that day was the moment they arose from the table.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Ned that afternoon when the work was done, "I have a fellow feeling with the man who said it was 'fifty dollars damage to him, to be poor,' if we had had a girl to help to-day. No, I don't believe I wish it, for experience is everything. I've learned this: because the household duties seem to slide along easily in their respective grooves, is no sign of their being

easy to perform. It takes wisdom, care and patience, and as Phil says, 'A housekeeper is a genius.'"

"I wonder if Aunt Sarah would be astonished if she were to hear of this day's work. I presume Hattie would have known just what to have done. I expect she is very good."

"I think," said Ned, when Madie had finished speaking, "that it is about as bad to be good and know it, and be vain about it, as it is to be handsome, and aware and vain of the fact. Aunt Sarah's is a rather aggressive goodness, it makes me wicked to see her self-righteous actions. What do you think, Phil?"

"Oh, my friends! I have kept up bravely and given a piece of my mind, to one and another, until I haven't any left."

"There are some stories of adventure that are good to repeat, for years after; it seems to me that this day's work could be classed among these," said Ralph, laughingly recalling the incidents of the day.

After this the work went on smoothly until Mrs. Burton's return. When she had been led all through the house by Benjie "to see how awful nice it was," and they had heard of their eastern relatives, and of Sada's new home, of the kind uncle and aunt who gave them a cordial welcome, they took their favorite position out of doors, while Phil related their housekeeping experience.

Mrs. Burton laughed merrily. "Ned wrote me about the convention and I gave the letter to Sarah to read."

"What did she say?" asked Christa eagerly.

"She seemed both surprised and pleased; her pleasure expended itself—but I think I had better not tell you. Your reward is coming up the road now."

Ralph and Ned went out to meet Mr. Burton, who had driven back to the depot. They unloaded a huge box at the door. Madie looked once, and turned to her mother.

"A piano, oh, mamma! I am so glad, so very glad, I can't tell it; but I am afraid I do not deserve it. I had so much help."

"We are willing you should have it;" and three of the

happiest young men in the state proceeded to place the piano in the little parlor.

“Mamma, I shall always remember what you have taught me, ‘not to despise the day of small things;’ house-work shall be mastered by me,” whispered Madie.

Phil swung his hat and gave “three cheers and a tiger,” the latter being the regular college yell. He went to his cousin and said, suiting the action to the word, “allow genius to bow to genius. Riches did not bring your piano, neither did work. Fame stepped in and won the day. My dear, don’t you see? You got it by simply ‘Running for Congress.’ ”

CHAPTER VIII.

"IF MADELINE WERE A BOY."

Nature had begun to hang out her sign of the season when the young men entered college. "We have enjoyed a beautiful rest and vacation. Now we must work again."

"It seems to me as if you were going South. I am very glad, however, that you are going to work for yourselves," said Mrs. Burton.

The family was alone and felt as if the house were nearly empty. Happy letters came of college life, and our heroes were fairly launched in their work.

Phil decided to study medicine. "I hardly knew whether to take law or medicine," he wrote his mother; "each has its advantages and disadvantages. I was anxious to settle on some definite plan. I presume I shall like the other better after I settle on the one, but there is no use in disliking things promiscuously. If I am going to be miserable, I want to know what it's to be about. Law has seemed very pleasant and attractive to me, ever since I made up my mind."

Mr. Burton grew more grave and quiet than usual as the season advanced. "Bell," said he one evening when they were alone together, "I believe I shall have to make that payment on Willard's note myself."

"I have been watching, Frank. It hardly seems possible. He certainly could pay part of it. I am sure Mr. Mason would wait."

"I think he is cramped himself. I was careful not to mention it before Ralph and Ned, they would have given up savings and plans instantly, and I did not want that done."

"You were wise; their lives have been darkened enough."

"If Madeline were a boy, she would be a great deal of assistance, and we could go West immediately. This pay-

ment would cripple us somewhat, still we would have enough left to improve a homestead, yet it would not be home, would it, dear?"

"Where you and the children are will always be home to me," she bravely answered.

The stove-pipe hole, that had troubled Benjie so much by leaking, was there still. Madie, occupying that room, overheard the conversation. Two years before her father had signed a note with a neighbor; it would be due in a short time. "What can I do? I will do something yet, to help papa. Girls can do ever so much, and I mean to try. I wish I could see Phil."

The dread idea grew into a reality, as October unfurled her gold and crimson banners and planted them on the hillside. "The farm must go," Mr. Burton sadly declared.

"I can't bear to think of the place going to strangers," Mrs. Burton confessed to her sister who was spending these last days with her. Prue understood her sister's feeling; all her married life had been spent on this farm, ghosts of vanished joys and vanished days haunted her daily. Each field, each tree in the yard, brought up something that opened the flood gates of memory, and the full tide of recollection flowed over all.

"Can't we manage somehow?"

"I think not, little daughter; another place will grow dear to us in a few years. I have drawn so many deposits from memory that I should think it would cease payment before very long," she said with a tender smile.

Winter did not tarry for them. "We had better not go before spring. I will go for a few weeks, but the family must stay here," declared Mr. Burton.

"Move into the city near us. Madie and Christa can study music and attend school, and I will see that your brother takes care of my sister," said Mrs. Benjamin Burton to her brother-in-law.

"I can see the advantage of our double relationship more than ever before," he cheerfully rejoined.

One more Thanksgiving was kept at the old farm-house. All gathering there to celebrate. Sada's letters were read

by the students. "If Ned has any difficulty in reading her writing I will lend him all the assistance in my power," said Ralph quietly.

It was well known that the two young people kept up a regular correspondence, and this remark was fully appreciated. "What has become of the picture," Christa asked. Ned was very deeply interested in something out of doors at that moment, and did not reply.

When they met at Christmas time, they were in their city home. A watch-meeting was held, and Madie's text was adopted by all. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in Heaven."

Madie did excellent work in school that winter. Coming home one afternoon, eager and glad to tell the joyful news that she "could graduate in two years if she studied hard;" giving her teacher as authority. "If I can do this I can help them all so much," she thought with pleasure. Late and early the girl studied, weaving the warp and woof of thought and plan, to form the fabric of a woman's earnest life.

A brighter spring morning never dawned, than the one which found our family ready to start.

"I am glad there are no more here; I feel so badly to bid this many good by," said Bert.

"What is the matter, Sam?" Mr. Burton asked of the man who was to drive the extra team.

"I've made up my mind not to go. My woman thinks we'd better stay here, so there is no use in looking up a place."

"What will you do, Frank?" Prue asked doubtfully.

"If Madie were a boy she could drive."

"Will you let me try it, papa? Mamma, tell him I can do it."

"I believe she can, Frank, and we need not be delayed." So they drove off. And the old farm-house, where they had spent so many happy days, was hereafter to be but a tender memory. The children were delighted

with the shifting scenes. Rocks came out to meet them. The bluffs of the great river, so long dim and hazy in the distance, grew plainer. The shadows climbed higher and higher, and one morning the travelers looked out to see them float away over to the other side, and the rocky hills stand out in the clear sunlight. "It will be all sunshine when we cross the river," said Madie gleefully.

The girl teamster kept up bravely; in sunshine or in rain, she carried out the work she had begun. She sent many a thought boat sailing on the sea of air, which returned to the port of her brain, after a time, with a full cargo of rounded sentences.

At last the journey was ended, and the cabin made to appear home-like. The trifles that had made their eastern home cosy and comfortable were made to serve the same purpose in their western dwelling. "The piano fills up the room pretty well, but I could not give up my beautiful present, could I?"

"I am glad you have it, Madie. The sweet old songs will sound very nicely in this strange place. I did not believe in disposing of the few nice articles we had for half price, and going without for years."

"How fast the days go, mamma! I haven't done half I intended to."

"It is a very great feat accomplished when one has really learned to take hold of a day."

"Just listen, mamma!" Madie was standing in the doorway, looking out over the prairie.

"To what? Nothing?" asked her mother, coming to her side.

"Yes, but it is the sweetest nothing I ever heard."

"You'll find that there is a difference, even in silences," Mrs. Burton said, resuming her work. Looking out over the waving prairie with the sky bending so tenderly above it, Madie felt a quiet within her, such as she had never felt before. When Nature lays her finger tips over the world, she usually lulls to rest and sleep.

They received a letter from the students, telling them that they would not be with them that summer vacation.

"We are going geologizing, and afterward will help classify specimens, so we can keep in school next year. We will get through together, as I am catching up with Ralph, slowly but surely," Ned wrote.

Another letter came from still farther east, stating that Mr. Joseph Burton would make them a visit in a few days. His brother went to the nearest railroad station—fifty miles away—to meet him. The visitor was greatly interested in his brother's children, and they repaid his love with interest.

"I believe his soul is as white as his hair," Madie said impulsively.

Uncle Joe overheard her. "Perhaps it is; there is a black streak here and there in each," he said to himself.

Madie was sitting by the window, one hand folded idly over the other, one day shortly after her uncle's arrival. "What makes my niece so sober?"

"I am only thinking; and when a person thinks she is apt to be sober, isn't she?"

"Usually, I think! Can't Madie make a confidant of Uncle Joe?"

"Yes, I can," she answered, turning suddenly toward him.

"We will walk across the prairie and I will gladly listen," he said.

"Uncle Joe, I want to help papa and mamma; how can I?"

Her uncle looked at her curiously. This young girl, eager to help her family, was so different from his own daughter, whose thoughts were absorbed by the gay society around her. "Would you like to go through school?"

"I would if papa could afford it."

"Perhaps he will let me afford it for him."

"I couldn't do that, unless it were as a loan, Uncle Joe."

Her independence was another surprise to him. A phase of woman's character he never had seen before. "We will talk about that by and by. I want to make you a present, what shall it be, jewelry, books or a pet?"

"I do not care for jewelry, and please do not give me a pet of any kind. I had one once and had to give her up."

"What was it?"

"A cow; and I never have liked cattle since. You need not give me anything, Uncle Joe; I shall love you just as well," she said, slipping her hand in his.

In answer to his inquiry, Mrs. Burton gave him a history of Star.

"Does she like horses?" he asked, after listening intently to the story.

"Very much."

"Frank, can you find room for a horse on the farm?"

"I think I can, but be careful, Joe, and not spoil my girls."

"I do not think they will be easily spoiled," he said decidedly.

One evening, after having been gone all day, the brothers drove home, and Uncle Joe called for Madie and Christa to come out. In the wagon was a dainty Jersey calf. "This is your property, Christa." At the rear of the wagon, a black colt was hitched; "and this belongs to you, Madie, to remember your Uncle Joe by."

"I can't think of any words strong enough to express my thanks."

"I am thoroughly satisfied, your faces have expressed enough." He gave a token to each of the boys and said, "You can take care of yourselves. When I see a girl who is anxious to be independent, I want to help her."

When he left them he gave Madie two crisp bank notes. "You can invest this in something to help the family if you wish, or keep it for yourself. If you need any assistance or would like to talk to anyone, write to Uncle Joe," and he kissed her good by.

CHAPTER IX.

WORK, WOOL AND WISDOM.

The days of that summer came and went, and autumn followed on with her golden treasures. The girl's cherished pets, Daisy, the calf, and the colt Leon, prospered and grew; the children roamed over the prairie and returned with their hands filled with wild flowers.

One day some men came and looked and went away. They came back with chain and compass, and others followed with spade and shovel. And another day, a shrill scream was sent out over the Nebraska plain, the puff, puff of the struggling iron horse was heard. The throb, throb of the great world behind it was felt. Civilization had passed way on beyond them, and "out west" was a hundred miles nearer sunset. The county-seat was located only three miles away.

"I've been trying to realize that this is the same place we found when we came. Is the change in it or us? I feel as if we had changed, too," said Madie one bright afternoon, in one of her confidentials with her mother.

"I think we have all changed together," said Mrs. Burton.

"Talk about 'people growing up with the country!' see how much work it has taken to make the country grow up with the people." Madie pointed to a long emigrant train that was steaming over the plain as she spoke.

The little girl had offered the money, given her by her uncle, to her father. "No, keep it, daughter; I desire you to use it for yourself." How many plans she laid in regard to it. That twenty dollars had bought everything that any member of the family expressed a wish for. If Mrs. Burton mentioned the need of an article of food or clothing, Madie's money was brought forward with cheerful alacrity, and if anyone had proposed the Northwest

passage as a benefit to any one of her people, those two bank notes would have been immediately produced.

A neighbor "dropped in" one afternoon, and, in the course of conversation, advised Mr. Burton to invest in sheep. "You'll find that they pay better than a'most anything else."

"I have thought of it," said Mr. Burton, "and perhaps I may."

"I came over to talk a little about education. I want to organize a deestricht right away. It will take a good while to get everything to running. Lizy and me both are anxious to give the young ones a chance; we never hed no great chance at schoolin' ourselves, and I suppose we feel the need of it all the more. I say, Burton, why can't this girl of yours train the neighbors' children this winter? She could have a room in Mitchell's house, and altogether, we could afford to pay her quite a good bit."

Madie looked eagerly at her father and mother.

"Madeline is too young," said Mr. Burton.

"Perhaps, Frank, it would be as well to let her try; it will be a care, to be sure, and I do not want her to do this unless she wishes it herself," said his wife.

"I should like to try, if you will let me, and if you think I can teach them. If I should fail, mamma, that would be dreadful. I should be so ashamed and sorry for all of you."

"You can just put it down that you ain't a goin' to fail. You ain't the kind of stuff that failin' folks is made of. I'll have all you can handle engaged before to-morrow night," and the man who loved gossip as well as the proverbial woman rose to go.

"Papa, can I buy sheep with the money Uncle Joe gave me?"

"Why, yes, Madeline, if you wish to."

"Will you ask Mr. Crowan if he knows where I can get some?"

"I will."

This dialogue had been carried on in an aside, while Mrs. Burton was entertaining the visitor.

John Crowan was greatly pleased with the prompt taking of his advice. He always had such a good supply of the article on hand, and usually could prescribe for such a small number.

"My brother has got a lot of sheep; I'll go over with you to-morrow; we can see about the school on the way over. So you are going into sheep, are you, Madeline? Well, I declare, that beats me. I say, Burton, she does about as well as a boy," and he paid Madie the highest compliment known to the masculine mind.

"If I can help them at home as well as if I were a boy, I shall be glad," said the young girl earnestly.

The next evening found her the proud owner of eight sheep; and twenty pupils were promised her on the following week.

Mr. Burton also invested in wool. Madie's property was marked by a hole in the left ear, to distinguish the two flocks. The sheep became quite well acquainted with their little mistress before school began.

Monday morning came. "What shall I do this first day, mamma? I dreaded it, and yet I wanted it to come. What shall I say to them?"

"Go into the work determined to help each one there. Do to-day just what you feel you can continue doing all the term. If you do not understand a question, study upon it. Don't assume to know more than you do."

"One thing, mamma, I shall not promise anything that I cannot fulfill. I have thought of my text ever so much lately, the one Mr. Mills read for me, 'The last shall be first and the first last.'"

"If you are 'chosen,' darling, be worthy of the trust." Mrs. Burton kissed her tenderly as she spoke. This was her first glimpse of Madie as a woman, and it made her think soberly and earnestly all the forenoon.

The young teacher found her scholars waiting for her outside the building; she bade them a pleasant good morning. Many of them were boys much older than herself. She had seen most of them before, but never in the light of this new relationship, and felt relieved when she found

herself alone in the room that had been prepared as comfortably as circumstances would permit. But the greatest ordeal she was yet to face. When they all came in and sat down facing her, she felt as if she were on stilts, and when she spoke, her voice sounded to herself like the boom of a cannon. A large boy, who had always looked upon life as a good joke, snapped a kernel of corn across the room and laughed at his own cunning.

Madie looked at the faces before her, and said: "We will get our books and begin work, and oh, boys and girls, I hope you will do the best you can; I honestly want to help you and to like every one of you, and I wish you would try and like me. I never did this work before, and I am anxious to do well. If we all work together, I think we can get along nicely. I do not ask you to climb up to me, but I ask you to climb *with* me. I shall offer no prizes; I think you will work just as well without, and I should feel so sorry for those who failed."

The little figure was trembling with suppressed excitement, and the brown eyes were eloquent with earnest pleading; but each scholar was hers to command from that moment. During the intermission she played as one of them, but in the school-room she was the patient, helpful teacher.

Early in the winter Madie received a letter from Aggie Peyton. "Your house is occupied," she wrote. "It does seem so strange not to see you there. I just tease papa all the time to sell and move out where you are."

"It makes me homesick to hear that. I don't like to think of strangers in that house, do you, Madie?" asked Christa.

"Yes, I had rather think of the old home as being full of people as it used to be, than to remember it as we left it; no curtains at the windows, no warmth anywhere. I believe I am glad that someone is living there for the house's sake."

Mr. Burton looked at his daughter as if she had gained new interest in his eyes, and smiled kindly without reply.

ing. He was a man who expressed very little affection for his children. Having been brought up with the understanding that all show of love and tender feeling was silly, he often failed to understand his impulsive, affectionate children.

Little six-year-old Benjie was hardly satisfied with the notice his father gave him, so, one evening, he made up his mind to get acquainted. When Mr. Burton took his book and seated himself before the fire, Benjie took a few steps toward him and said, "Papa, I can talk about ever so many things."

"Can you?" said his papa absently.

"Yes;" coming a little nearer. "I'll tell you a nice story about a little boy and his papa, and his papa 'ud say, 'come here, little boy, and talk with your own papá,' and the boy comed, and he laid down his book an' his paper, and talked, lots of times, and they got real good acquainted. Say, papa, why don't you?" He was close beside his father. Mr. Burton, still holding his book, was becoming interested. "This papa liked his little boy very much, and the boy was consider'ble younger than his father, but he talked right along, and wasn't a bit afraid to say he 'loved him fifteen dollars.' And his papa would take him up every time and kiss him, 'cause he had lots of kisses right on his lips. Say, papa, why don't you? He'd go out and call his papa, and he'd answer, 'Here I am, dear,' just as nice. Ain't that a nice story? And he——" but the rest of the story was unfinished, unless it crept down into the heart through the lips of each member of the family, who kissed him in turn.

This story had a wholesome effect on Mr. Burton. Although it took a number of years for him to grow really familiar with his children, he often, after this, spent a short time early in the evening with Bert and Benjie.

"How would it do to read aloud these winter evenings, Bell? Madeline and Christabel ought to be able to understand and read with us," Mr. Burton said.

"I should like it," said his wife.

"We should, too. We could have a reading club all by ourselves," said Madie.

All through the winter they read, at least an hour each evening, stopping to explain, if explanation was necessary, and discussing the subject, when the reading was finished. If there were any items to be thoroughly remembered or looked up, a blank book was provided for the purpose, and many a beautiful quotation and item of interest was transferred to its white pages. In this manner the corner stone of broad culture for two young minds was laid in that settler's cabin on the western frontier.

School closed in the spring, and the people were so well satisfied, that Madie was asked to preside over the new school building during the summer.

Her sheep prospered, and grew, and roamed. Whenever she made her appearance, the whole flock would gather around her. Someone told her that sheep needed a change, so she drove them from one field to another, until they would stay nowhere for long at a time. One morning, shortly after school commenced, as the teacher was engaged in explaining a problem, she heard one of the little ones say, "I guess that must be a pack of wolves coming." She glanced from the window and saw her "personal property." She went to the door and was met by a joyous bleating. "Poor 'Mary,' I wonder if she was mortified when her 'lamb' appeared," she soliloquized. These sheep did not propose to "wait patiently about till *Madie* did appear," so Bert was sent home with them. It was some time, however, before the school settled into its usual quiet.

It is one of the unexplainable mysteries, that the exercise of the vocal organs of a cow, a horse, a sheep, a chicken or any domestic animal—sounds they have been accustomed to all their lives—should so completely upset the dignity of scholars in a country school. The sound of whistle and gong will not disturb any room filled with city juveniles, but the smallest bantam's crow will cause every boy and girl, in a rural school-room, to double with suppressed merriment, while a squirrel on the

fence will cause nearly as great a disturbance as a cyclone.

Shortly after this, wool began to drop, and wolves and dogs to rise. "They seemed to know the mark," Madie would say when relating the story afterward, "and when a wolf grew hungry, he would make his way to our flock and single out a sheep with a hole in the left ear. I fed out what mutton I had, but I never cared to invest in sheep again. 'Pulled wool' did not bring the first price in the market."

When the summer term closed, Madie went to her parents and laid before them the plan she had cherished for a year. "I have saved my wages and will have enough to send Christa and me to school next year."

"I do not like to have you take your money," said Mr. Burton. "I wish I could afford to pay the expenses of both, but we will have barely enough to provide the necessities for the family. I had so little left after paying that note. Next year if crops are good I can send Christabel. You had better use your money for yourself."

"But, papa, if you would let her go, I would not be so homesick. That is, if mamma can spare both of us."

"I will talk with your mother, and if this seems the best way to both of us, I will accept your offer, but remember it is only a loan."

The talk with mother resulted in the acceptance of Madie's offer. "It will do her no harm to carry out her generous impulses. We can make it all up to her sometime, Frank."

"I intend to do that, but it hurts my manhood to have her working thus for the family."

"It ought not. If she were a son instead of a daughter, she would help to carry on the farm, and if she chooses to lend assistance in some other way, she ought to be allowed to do it. It is good for a girl to be independent. I am anxious to have her educated."

"So am I; but the boys must be thought of. A man in these days should be a collegiate."

"Oh, Frank, I am afraid you are narrow in your ideas of girls! It seems to me that the mothers of a nation should be as thoroughly informed as the fathers. If there is one sentence more than another that I dislike to hear, it is, "Go to your father, child, I don't know anything about it!" Children copy the mistakes of others, and who is patterned after so much as a mother? Many boys pay little heed to a mother's teachings, as they grow older, because they feel themselves so much better posted than she is. I want to have my daughters become earnest, thoughtful women."

"Strong-minded," he said, half questioningly.

"Yes, indeed, never a *weak-minded* daughter for me."

Mr. Burton smiled at the enthusiasm of the little woman and concluded the conversation by saying: "Well, Bell, I am willing to have my wife and daughters stand as high and be as cultured as any women in the land."

Ere the summer had ended, a little stranger came and knocked at the door of each heart, and all bade her enter. They gravely discussed a name, and finally decided to call her Josephine.

"Oh, dear!" said Bert, wringing his hands. "It's a girl again. If she had been a boy, she would have been a great deal of help."

"Well done, my son," said his mother laughing. "You have learned already to hum the tune that others sing about the opposite sex."

"We'll have to manage, dear little sister," said Christa, bending over the little one.

"Yes," said Mrs. Crowan. "It seems hardly right to kill her if she is a girl."

Mrs. Crowan was a very capable woman; handy everywhere. Life was a difficult problem, but she had begun with the calm determination to solve it. She had an opinion on every subject, and if her husband did not at first quite agree with her, he had such unbounded faith in her as being a "master hand at calculatin'" that he readily adopted her ideas and plans. She amused Mrs. Burton greatly in her free, outspoken way.

"I was taught to think it was awful to be an old maid, so I married the first one that asked me; that was John, and we've got along first-rate. We've seen some real hard times, and we've seen a number of good ones, too. A life all sunshine is like a funeral without tears, kind o' out of place. Now, for my part, when I go to a funeral, I like to see folks cry, it's what you expect. You didn't go to Charlie Slater's wife's, she that was Lizzie Bolton, funeral, did you?"

"No," Mrs. Burton replied.

"That was the cheerfulest funeral I ever attended. I never did see folks seem to enjoy a real good rest as much as they did. Liz was dressed up the best she ever was. You know old Mrs. Green, don't you?" Mrs. Burton nodded. "She always turns out to funerals, she has just the kind of look that does real well in such a place. She got there too late to get in where the mourners was, so when I came out she clutched onto my arm and says she 'how did they seem to take it?' I was that mad at her that I just snapped out 'they haven't taken it at all yet, and I wouldn't either, if I was in their places, before folks that come to a funeral as they would go to a circus, to see them in the ring perform.' I don't know as I ought to have answered her in that way. I am sure it ain't the kind of conversation laid down in a book of etiquette, but 'rules for good society' won't always work; a body has to be thrown back on her own resources pretty often. If people fail to ask questions by rule, I'd like to know how anyone is going to answer by rule. Lizzie wasn't such an extra woman, to be sure, but she'd have had to been a good deal worse not to be good enough for Charlie Slater. She never had anything extra while she was living, but she had a big funeral. Lots of folks went there out of curiosity, and in my opinion, if she wasn't good enough to associate with when living, they had no business to go there after she was dead, just as Mrs Green did 'to see how they'd take it.'

"I told John going home, 'Now you see Charlie will marry some real nice girl. I don't believe there is a man

in this world, low enough and mean enough, not to get a real nice girl for a wife if he really makes up his mind to."

Mrs. Crowan stopped to take breath and twist up her hair. Like the woman in one of Dicken's novels, she "was always winding herself up by her back hair." When she became excited her hair did not "stand on end," but her hairpins did, which amounted to about the same thing.

"If Mrs. Crowan's hair wasn't fastened at one end it would all fly away," Benjie whispered to Madie one day, when that lady was busily talking.

"He'll fool some real good, steady girl, see if he don't," pushing the last hairpin in place and continuing the conversation. "When girls get to be as particular in choosing a husband as men are in choosing a wife, there'll be a different lot of people in this world, and 'social evils'—polite name for low down meanness—will be done away with. Whenever I hear of people kicking a woman for anything, I want to run and kick a man three times as far for doing the same thing. That may not be a very lady-like expression, but I declare I believe it is womanly, and I like this word a good deal better than I do the other. In fashion magazines we read of 'what ladies are wearing'; in the Bible we read of what women were. The idea of describing the mother of Jesus as a 'very lady-like person!'

"I'm bringing up my daughters to believe that men and women are equally accountable before the laws of both God and man, and if they make any exceptions, to make it in favor of the woman every time. If every mother would do that, it would soon put a stop to lots of men's deviltry. I expect you think I've expressed myself strongly on this subject, but I had a sister once, and on her wedding day she put her little white hand into the hand of a '*gentleman*,' so the tailors said, but there was no *manhood* about him. His hand was white enough, but his soul was as black as that stove. He broke her heart and now he has married another respectable woman, and yet she has been trained to false notions, or something is lacking in her brain or her conscience, for the only thing

she said when told of his work was: 'Well, boys will be boys and men will be men the world over.' If she has her heart broken, too—and she will if she's got any—I can't feel quite as sorry for her as I would if she had not made that remark."

"I believe," said Mrs. Burton, "that if boys were brought up as carefully as girls, they would be a great deal better than they are. There isn't much difference in the cradle. People say things before even young boys that they would not before little girls. And many parents allow their sons to go to places where they would not think of permitting their daughters to venture near."

"That's it exactly. My brother-in-law was one of the kind of men whose every action seemed to say, 'I don't see how any woman could so stand in her own light as to refuse me, if I should offer myself.' I'd have been glad to have had him popped the question to me. The surprise on his countenance would have done me ever so much good. I suppose I wasn't his style. He wasn't mine, either, and I wanted him to understand it. The trouble of it all was, he was too handsome; he thought he could get most anything in the matrimonial market just because of that. Like I've seen folks at auction, put in one good article with a lot of poor truck and pass 'em all off for a good price. If some accident had happened to him, and marred his beauty when he was young, he might have been quite a man. John Crowan looks a great deal better to me than he ever did. John isn't such a bad looking man when he's dressed up, and he's got the honestest face I ever see. I was a regular idiot not to have liked him better when I married him, but a lot of old women kept saying, 'Lizy, you'll be an old maid if you don't look out,' and I—like any other simpleton of twenty, that has never had no better training—got scared. But I have never been very sorry, and if my girls do as well as their mother did, there's one, at least, who'll be satisfied. I'm not going to talk to 'em about it, for I don't believe in putting such thoughts into their heads. They'll come quick enough. I do want 'em to be as careful in

selecting a husband, as they would be in picking out a dress. Lot's of 'em ain't, though. They examine the goods to see if it is all wool, and are particular about the shade, and study on it for quite a while; but for a husband they take what they can get, and lots of times it's a mighty poor article."

"Weren't you ever in love when you were young?" asked Madie, who had been, with her mother, an interested listener to the one-sided conversation.

"Yes, and had the chicken-pox, measles, whooping-cough, and mumps, lived through them all, thanks to a wise mother and a good constitution. Here, let me take the baby!" and twisting her hair with one hand, she laid the little one on her knees and patted it with the other.

"You don't believe in the oak and vine, then?" said Mrs. Burton, anxious to hear what Mrs. Crowan would say next.

"Well, yes; if you can get an oak, but you can't always be sure. For my part, I like to see a woman stand straight up for herself, ready to help or be helped when it is necessary. No two people ever lived together that didn't have lots to bear from each other, and it's best to begin with that understanding. No need of praising up matrimony too much; it ain't all heaven, no more than anything else. I've seen the day I've wished myself single just for a minute, and I guess the most of us have, if we'd be honest and say so, but that's the way with every path we walk in this world; there'll come times when we wish we'd taken another. Madie, you're getting them gathers too full, I'm afraid." Madie brought her work forward for inspection, and Mrs. Crowan was soon as deeply interested in the hang of that skirt as she had been in the discussion of matrimony. She never did things by halves, and was never known to "halt between two opinions." She either stood for or against on every question.

"Benjie, my son, don't make such a noise. You will drive Mrs. Crowan wild," said his mother. The little boy had overturned the chairs and was playing he was "a wild Indian out on the prairie."

"Never you mind," interposed Mrs. Crowan. "I don't care how much noise a child makes if it's only a good-natured noise. I can't bear to see them fight. I always want to interfere then. I've seen folks scold children for laughing, and get them to crying, and then settle back contentedly, as if they'd done their duty, and got them under good control. I'd rather hear laughing than crying any time. Folks don't seem to care as much as they ought to about a child's feelings. When I was real small, a presiding elder used to come to our house, and one time he took me on his knee, and said to the minister who was there: 'She is a nice little girl, but decidedly plain. Her features are so very irregular.' Some way his talk wasn't real comforting. I don't believe he thought I would understand him. I slipped down and went to the looking-glass. I wondered if everyone would notice how homely I was. The minister patted me on the head and said: 'You'll grow up to be a nice, good woman, I have no doubt, and that will be better than beauty.' I could not help wondering if I would be as good as I would have been if I had been better looking. I was scarcely five years old then; but that man's words made me shy and awkward before strangers for years after they were said. Animals and children know a good deal more than folks give 'em credit for knowing."

September was hurrying toward them, and the girls were busily engaged in preparation, for they were to enter school in a short time. How the children watched the unfolding of the little human bud that was planted in their midst. Her first smile—when a dimple found a resting place in her little round cheek—was hailed with delight. Josie was the center of attraction, morning, noon and night.

"Mamma, I believe I have thought more this year than I ever did back in the old house. Do you suppose I would have done so if I had stayed there?"

"I do not know, Madie; but I believe that migration is necessary to grow ideas; thoughts, like trees, become rooted if allowed to remain in one place always."

"What makes you so sober?"

"I think I am being sorry for myself in advance. I shall be very lonely when both my little daughters are gone away. I am trying to realize that you are almost young ladies. It isn't the mere act of going away to school that causes me to think soberly, but it is the first break in our little family. Home will never be quite the same to you again. You will want to teach or have some other plan in regard to yourselves and us. I cannot keep you children, neither do I wish it; but, girlyies, I want you both to remember, as you grow *up*, not to grow *away*, too, and think of this as my dearest wish: I want you to tell mamma *everything*."

"We will always," they promptly replied. And they did. No incident so trivial in their lives that mamma was not greatly interested in its recital.

One evening, when Madie was writing to Ned and Ralph, and the shadows had crept in between her and the paper, she turned to the window in time to hear her brothers call for "all to come and see the movers." The two wagons came on slowly.

"Mamma, they are going to stop here," called Christa.

Ere an answer could be given, a girl sprang from the first wagon and bounded toward Madie. "Oh, you dear darling, don't you know me?"

"Aggie!" was all she could say; and the entire family went out to meet their old friends, the Peytons.

In eager questions and answers of the old home, and old friends, the evening passed. "It is so nice to see someone from home," said Christa, who had suffered more from homesickness than all the rest.

"I hope you will settle near us; it will seem so very nice to have you to talk to," and Madie embraced her friend again.

"Those girls have begun their friendship right where they left off; I wish older people could always do that. But how much taller Aggie is than Madie."

"I am mamma's girl," said Madie, when Mrs. Peyton

ceased speaking. "I presume I never will be very tall."

"Do you remember ——" Aggie began.

Christa laughed merrily. "I wonder how many times each one has begun a sentence in that way!"

"I was going to ask Madie," Aggie went on, smiling at Christa's remark, "if she remembered Phil's deciding and undeciding about a profession?"

"Indeed, I do. It was while mamma was East, and he talked to you and me a long time one evening, and finished by saying: 'Well, girls, I don't believe in investing very heavily in confidential stock, but sometimes I take all the shares I can, when with friends, and I am sure they will stand at par.'"

"That was why I spoke of it to-night; we were all growing so confidential over our reunion," Aggie said, putting her arm lovingly around her friend.

CHAPTER X.

THE TORCH IS LIGHTED.

At twilight the next evening, Madie, seated by the window, was rocking her little sister, and listening to the voices around her. "Dont you know how to play it? Well, I'll tell you. Take a stick and set fire to one end of it; the rest of us will sit down in a row. I'll take the stick and hold the lighted end up, and pass it on to the next one, and he'll pass it on to the next, and so on till you get clear around. You must be careful and give it swing enough so that it will keep burning, for whoever has it in his hand when it goes out will be judged and have a forfeit to pay; and when you hand it to the next, if it's burning, you must cry 'Jack's afire!' Do you understand?"

Grant Peyton is explaining a new game to Bert and Benjie.

"Bert answers: "Yes, I understand."

And Bert's echo says: "Course we do."

"All right, then, get a stick and we will play. Come girls," as Aggie and Christa made their appearance, "you can play, too." Robert, coming along just then, did not deem it beneath his dignity to join with the others, and the game went on merrily.

"Well, yes; I expect to give my boys a good education, and when they are twenty-one, I hope to be able to give them a start in whatever profession or line of business they may choose to follow. I shall begin in a few years to give them an allowance, that they may learn the value of money."

"And the girls, Mr. Burton, what are your plans in regard to them?"

"They are going to school for the next year, anyway. Madeline has almost taken care of herself ever since we came West. I shall try to dress them as well as my neighbors' daughters, or as well as I can afford to, and

after a time, when the right man comes along, I want to have enough, so that they need not go away from the home nest empty-handed. I haven't prospered lately, and farm work is beginning to tell on me. I can't stand as much as I once could. If Madeline were a boy, I would soon have someone to lean upon." This conversation is borne to Madie's ears on the sweet night air, from the front steps where her father and Mr. Peyton are seated.

"I told my husband that we could stop and make you a visit, and prospect a little, and if there were a good opening in the village, we could locate there. Robert has spent the last two years in school; he doesn't care to study a profession and will go right in with his father. It doesn't make much difference where we spend the rest of our days. Aggie and Grant will be in school for a few years longer. If they do not get more mischief than book learning into their heads, I shall be mistaken. I sometimes half agree with Mrs. Carter, that the world is growing worse all the time, and wonder why a Christian ever smiles."

"There, Mrs. Peyton, you are tired to-night and the world looks gray; but the sun will shine to-morrow, so that you can feel it way down in your heart. It isn't religion that makes us blue; it may be doubt or indigestion, but never attribute it to the grace of God. The thought of the Home just beyond should make us brighter and happier always. I am real glad that you have come, and I hope you will locate in Clayton. Mr. Peyton will be a great deal of comfort to Frank, who will feel encouraged to have his old neighbor so near him. He has had to work pretty hard, and has not received much benefit from his labor; that is always discouraging, you know. He is ambitious to help our sons, and has to depend entirely upon hired help; it costs so much to carry on a farm. If our eldest were a son, she could go right on with the work, and see to things out of doors." This last dialogue comes from the kitchen, where the two mothers are working and visiting.

Madie bends over her little sister, sleeping so quietly, and says softly: "Poor little girl, you are one of the unfortunates, too. I've played eaves-dropper to the proving of the old adage, twice to-night; I never knew before that mamma blamed me for being a girl!" a little sadly. "The amount of it all is this: Josie, if I were a boy, I'd be a blessing and a help, as it is, I am only a stumbling block in the way of helping my brothers. That heathen country I read of the other day, where they kill off the girl babies, must be a little in advance of our civilization. They don't kill them here, but feed them and cloth them, and let them feel their dependence. Do girls really amount to so little, I wonder? Ought we to be obliged to ask for every penny? Why can't we be helped when we are twenty-one? We must wait until we marry and then our husbands are to receive a premium for taking us off their hands. I have too much self-respect to permit such a bargain to be made. If we never marry, I suppose we are never to receive anything; and then they laugh at woman's frivolity and extravagance! How can we be expected to know the value of money? I am determined to try and do as well as the brother in whose place I stand. It is the old story of David Copperfield's sister, reversed."

"Jack's a fire! there, not one of us was judged! Christa came very near letting it go out; girls hardly ever give it swing enough. Come and see me feed my Jack rabbits, I've got four of them;" and Bert leads the way to the barn.

The brand is burning itself out on the ground. Madie looks at it absently; all at once a thought comes to her like an inspiration. "No one was judged," she said musingly. "Here I am, the oldest of the Burton family, and although I am only a girl, I am bound to keep that torch burning, which was lighted by my ancestors when

'The breaking waves dashed high;'

for of course they came over in the Mayflower. No one who makes any pretensions to respectability ever had ancestors come over in any other ship. It is in my hands

now; I want to give it swing enough, so that when I hand it to the next, I will have no 'forfeit to pay.'"

"Why, Madie," said Christa, "have you been holding Josie all this time?"

"Yes, dear, and I've been giving myself a severe thinking, too; I will put Josie in her crib, and then will tell you all about it."

"What was your 'think' about?" Christa asked, when they had reached their room.

Madie briefly told what she had heard and thought. "Christa, help me to do this work, so that at the last we can cry, 'Jack's Afire!'"

"I think we can manage," was Christa's characteristic reply.

Madie's sixteenth birthday came. "I am going to have a party, mamma, and the guests are all here, without sending out invitations," she said gaily. "I do wish Mrs. Crowan could come."

"So do I," said Christa.

"Is she that little, black-eyed, energetic woman we met the other day?" inquired Robert Peyton.

"Yes," answered Madie, and then stopped.

"Somehow, I never can think of anything to say to him," she remarked to Christa, when they were doing up the morning's work.

"Why, Madie, how queer that is; I can talk to him just as easily as I can to Aggie; I think he is a nice man. He seems to think I know a little and listens to what I have to say as much as to the others." The subject of this conversation, quietly walking outside, heard and smiled to himself.

When the work was done, Madie went in search of her father. Christa looked after her with a world of sympathy on her round, dimpled face. She knew her sister was making an effort to draw nearer to this parent. She found him in the little room that the family used for reading and study, but which could hardly be dignified by the name of library. "Papa," she said, going up to him,

her heart beating so that she could scarcely control her voice, "do you know that I am sixteen years old to-day?"

"So you are, Madeline; I am sorry I cannot afford to make you a present," he said kindly.

"That isn't what I came here for. I don't care for any gift. I came to tell you that I am anxious to do the best I can, if I am a girl. I'll try so hard to be as much help to you as a son would be, if you'll only tell me where and when I can do so. Dear papa, I should be so glad to be of some use to you, and if you would only try and like me as well as *that boy*, it would make me very happy." The tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"My daughter, I do like you as well as any of my children," stroking her hair awkwardly. "But you must not be troubled with business matters. See, it is making me gray! I do not want my little girl to become a careworn woman right away." Madie had not noticed before how thickly the silver threads were beginning to show in her father's dark hair, nor how deeply the years had scored themselves on his forehead.

She made another attempt. "I don't want to be bold or presuming, papa; but I have thought that something was troubling you, and maybe I could help to drive it away. Have you any plan concerning Christa and I, that we could help you carry out?"

"None, dear, only that each may become a good, true woman. Isn't that enough?"

"Yes, papa; that is a good deal. But you have plans for the boys and teach them to be independent, and strong, and brave. I thought perhaps you might—or that is, I didn't know but you might——" Her voice died away and she folded and unfolded her handkerchief nervously.

"Well, well, Madeline; boys, you see,—why boys grow to be men!" and as if that were a convincing argument, he turned to the roll of papers he had been examining when she entered.

Disappointed and sorrowful, she went to her room. "Girls grow to be women, and we will see what a woman can do!" she said firmly.

Aggie came up presently. "May I come in and visit?"

"Yes, dear. I have neglected you shamefully to-day. But this is the only sixteenth birthday I shall ever have, and I have had a number of things to do."

They sat down and talked busily for a time. "Rob and Christa have gone after Mr. and Mrs. Crowan and family."

"That was very kind of them," said Madie earnestly. She always appreciated a kindness. "Aggie!"

"Well!"

"I have been dreading to ask, but do you know anything about Star?"

"Oh, Madie, I wish you hadn't asked me! She died last spring."

The girl tried bravely to keep back the tears, but they would come. "I thought I could buy her back some day, but I presume I never could have done so."

Aggie was lovingly sympathetic. "Let us go and see Leon, he is always so glad to have you come to him." They went to the barn together and on their return found Mrs. Crowan fanning herself vigorously with her shaker.

"So you are 'sweet sixteen' to-day, Madie."

"Yes, I am sixteen. But it does not seem as if I had been fifteen for a whole year."

"You'll find out that each year gets shorter as you grow older, as if all the years that had gone by was a pushin' it along." John Crowan looked proudly at his wife, and then at the others, as if to say, "she knows just what to say and when to say it," and she in her quaint way really amused them all.

"I like her," said grave Robert Peyton. "She is one of the most original persons I ever saw."

"I knew you would think so," said Christa, her face glowing with pleasure. "And her visit has done Madie ever so much good."

The little girls, Mattie and Alice Crowan, were out in the yard with the little boys, playing "hide and seek;" so the day was enjoyed by all, and Madie's "party" was a success.

Mr. Peyton's family were settled in Clayton, and Madie and Christa were to board with them while at school. The two older girls in the same classes, with Christa one year behind. Prof. Pearce soon came to know that no task was too hard, nor lesson too long, for Madie to master. So much more eagerly does one work when there is an object in view! And the little "Torch" blazed all winter.

CHAPTER XI.

MORE THAN "TWO TO MAKE A BARGAIN."

The snow was falling rapidly. Mrs. Grenall laid aside her knitting and walked to the window to look out on the blinding storm. She was evidently looking for someone. A boy came bounding in; looking at him, his aunt began to realize that there had been something pleasant in the afternoon, which she had not discovered until she saw it reflected in the child's face. "Harry, have you seen your sister?"

"No, auntie. I think she must be at the church yet."

"I wish she would come, the storm is growing worse every moment."

As she said this her husband entered, bringing with him the object of her solicitude. "Dear me, Sada! I have worried about you all the afternoon. I know you will have a severe cold, after this exposure."

"Oh, auntie, you are too easily worried. A little roughing once in a while does me good." She removed her wraps and sat down to relate the progress of the rehearsal.

Sada Lee has not changed much in these two years. She has the sort of face that twenty years will not alter beyond recognition. Her stay with her relatives has been pleasant and peaceful. She and her little brother have never been made to feel that they were with any but their own. There is a difference between *being* away from home and *feeling* away from home. Her uncle and aunt were not demonstrative in their affections, but they were genuine. Sada, quiet and reserved herself, understood and was content.

Mr. Grenall was wealthy, and a trifle "purse proud." He was kind and generous to the orphans, because of real affection for them, besides, they helped him to exhibit his

wealth and to stand well in the opinion of his fellows. He was a man who loved to do his duty, but he was anxious that others should know that he did it. His wife was a kindly disposed woman, who had never ceased to be grateful to him for choosing her, "when he could have gotten anyone he had been a mind to ask. If he had been the least particle ambitious, he would have been president long ago, for he is a man who makes friends wherever he goes," she frequently said with a proud smile that defied contradiction.

A great lover of patent medicine; at the slightest symptom of illness in any member of the family, out came her huge box of remedies, and she prescribed freely. She frequently enjoyed poor health herself, and was alarmingly frank with an invalid, giving her diagnosis of the case, and the doubt of recovery, as readily as if it were the most exhilarating news that could be given. There was no one in that great city who dispensed charity with a more liberal hand than this fussy little woman. Helping the poor and visiting the sick was the one great solace for the loss of her two brave sons.

"The decorations are even prettier than they were last year," said Sada, "and the carols are beautiful."

"How is Miss Marvin?" Mrs. Grenall enquired.

"She is still very hoarse, and sent word to-day that she would not be able to sing that duet with me. She has found a substitute, a Miss Hattie Burton. She is Madie's own cousin, and is visiting here. She tells me that her people are coming to live here directly after New Years."

"Does she sing her part well?"

"She has a good voice and it is highly cultivated, but it does not express very much feeling." She added laughingly: "Here I am, verifying Prof. Venley's words, that 'singers fail to mete out justice to each other, and are apt to detect any flaw in a voice, and tell of it immediately, so one seldom sees a peaceable church choir or a united company of vocalists.' I can't see why it should be so!"

"I do not know, I am sure," said Mrs. Grenall, in a

tone that proved she had not given the subject any thought. She simply gave this "union of words followed by a full pause," because she considered some remark necessary.

"The girls told me to-day that Miss Burton was engaged to Mr. Lawrence," said Sada.

"She will be mistress of a handsome home. The postman left these letters for you, and I had quite forgotten them."

Sada took them from her aunt, and called to her brother, "Come here, Harry, and listen to what Madie writes of Bert and Benjie: 'They are both studying at home this winter, and speak of Harry often. They are counting the days until Christmas, and have thought of a number of impossible things to give to all their friends. I don't know but I am about as impracticable as they are, as I would like to be wealthy enough to purchase a Christmas gift for all the people I know and love, and for all the others who are likely to have none.'"

"She will never be wealthy with that disposition," said Mr. Grenall, who had laid down his paper to listen to the letter. "She is at school, is she not?"

"Yes, and I presume she is doing nicely; although nearly three years younger than I, she was nearly as far advanced when I last saw her. She used to write the sweetest little compositions, and the stories she used to tell to Harry and her little brothers were so entertaining and real."

Sada had been in school for two years, and was soon to be introduced to the social world about her. Self-possessed and womanly always, she would never "turn the heads" of the gay people with whom she mingled; but the firm mouth and luminous gray eyes would bring many to her side who were in search of a friendly, sympathetic listener; a woman who would be ever welcome in a sick room, and little children would turn and look at her, as if they knew by some subtle intuition that she were their friend. Not given to either extreme of mirth or sadness, she carried a restful, peaceful feeling to those with whom she associated.

"Who was your other letter from?" Harry enquired, when she had read Madie's letter a second time.

"Perhaps Sada doesn't care to answer that question," his aunt said quietly.

Harry did not propose to let the matter drop. With all the inquisitiveness of childhood, he began to guess. After he had named a number of improbable correspondents to all but himself, he said: "Sada, it must have been from Ned!"

Sada only laughed, and drawing the subject of the cross-examination from her pocket, where she had dropped it in the hope that she might escape to her room and read it unobserved, opened and perused it carefully. Mrs. Grenall seemed to think that the contents might be reflected on her niece's face, and watched her closely as she read. "I am afraid," thought she, "that Sada is really in love with that poor student!" If he only could do for her as her uncle and I can, I should not mind. Poverty would come hard to her after living in luxury. Mr. Yonge is more than half in love with her now, and who knows what may happen before the winter is over?"

Sada, thinking of the tender, hopeful words Ned had written, was too happy to notice the stillness.

The Christmas entertainment was an unbounded success, and the ladies of the church were heartily congratulated. Sada and Hattie sang their duet, the rich melody floated over the congregation and many a note awoke a sweet echo in the hearts of the listeners. The stately blonde bowed slightly in recognition of the applause and took her seat in the audience, while Mr. Lawrence, portly and complacent, beamed upon her with such an air of proprietorship that Sada almost shuddered, and the other girls giggled and said, "what a good match it was!" and flirted with one and another of the attendant cavaliers, forgetting all about Bethlehem's Star and the Shepherd, and the Babe in the manger. Later some went to a ball and celebrated the birth of Christ by dancing until near dawn, and those people, if asked to attend a hop on Sun-

day, would look properly shocked and quote, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy!" Would that someone might quote in return, "Consistency, thou art a jewel!"

Mrs. Grenall and Sada called on Miss Burton. After she had kept them waiting for some time, she came slowly in and gave her hand in greeting, in the coldest, most approved style, then sank back in an easy-chair. After the inevitable weather had been discussed, Mrs. Grenall asked if this were her first visit to the city, and how she was enjoying it. She replied that she had never been in the city before, and was enjoying her stay very much indeed.

"I enjoyed your singing the other evening," said Mrs. Grenall.

"I enjoyed every other number on the programme better. It would have been an absolute failure if it had not been for Miss Lee;" she inclined her head toward Sada in a stately manner. "I am confident that I never did so poorly."

"It was very kind of you to lend your assistance to us. We all appreciated it," Sada hastened to say. Then all sat smiling, trying to feel comfortable, and to think of another topic to introduce.

"My niece is very well acquainted with your uncle's family."

"Is she, indeed!" with a slight uplifting of the eyebrows; it was not well-bred to express great surprise at anything. "When did you last see them?" Sada briefly told of her stay with the Burtons.

"I met my Uncle Benjamin and my Aunt Prudence two years ago. They, together with Aunt Bell, visited us. I think I remember Aunt Bell's mention of you at that time, but I had quite forgotten the name. Father visited them last summer. He speaks highly of my cousins, but I should call them a trifle eccentric."

"They are very nice, sensible girls."

"Oh, I presume so," agreeing with her in such an indolent way that Sada felt as if open contradiction would have been preferable.

"I've heard Mrs. Carter speak of 'my niece Hattie,' but she is even more stereotyped than I expected," said Sada when they were returning homeward. "I wonder if she can be as happy as people are who do not act and talk by rule. Her life must be very insipid, auntie."

"I think she is quite a nice appearing young lady. Not overly cordial, to be sure, but she is very polite."

Sada, who was beginning to enjoy the change from that chilling presence to the bright winter sunshine, answered, "very polite."

"We will drive to the shops now, for I am very anxious to select your first party dress. I shall be very proud to introduce you to our society friends."

Miss Lee's *debut* was successfully made. Her aunt praised and petted her more than ever; the gay world smiled upon and flattered her, and the one who was least interested was Sada herself. Mr. Yonge devoted himself to her from the first. He had arrived at an age and position that made it desirable for him to marry. "Miss Lee was a sensible girl, who would not be opinionated. Grenall, her uncle, was a rich man. What else was necessary?" Thus reasoning, he grew daily more interested in this property he wished to possess. Mr. and Mrs. Grenall looked on and smiled, and helped it along, or tried to, with cautiously worded compliments for each in the presence of the other.

"I wish they would not say so much," soliloquized Sada one evening. "I am afraid that I shall appear self-conscious before him. They act as if they thought that the marriage was to be an absolute certainty. I wonder what Ned would say," she thought, abruptly changing not the *subject* but the *subjects*.

One night, when Mr. Yonge was attending her home from the opera, Sada said, "It was all so beautiful that I cannot find words to express myself."

"Yes, I do not remember of ever seeing richer toilettes."

Sada, thinking only of the rich, rare melody, felt a discord through it all, and said no more.

On reaching her home he took her hand. "Can I come to-morrow morning? I wish to speak to you."

Striving vainly to conquer the repugnance she felt, she answered, "Yes."

He said "Good night," and walked back to the carriage with the air of a business man who had made another wise venture.

In her own room she turned and locked the door, as if she were afraid her very thoughts might escape.

"It must be that he means more than a mere call. Did I encourage him? I couldn't refuse him a simple request and I have never been more than quietly friendly with him." Then a voice said: "Why not say yes? Your future will be assured. Many a girl would be glad of such an opportunity. You will be able to do so much for the poor. Do not be so romantically silly! What reason can you give your uncle and aunt for such a decision?"

But another voice was heard. "You promised to wait and you said you would 'never forget.'" The young student, at that moment studying busily in his room at that Western University, did not know until years after, how nearly he had come to losing the woman whom he had loved and worked and waited for during all the years of his manhood.

Mr. Yonge called. Mrs. Grenall, an interested observer, saw Sada's troubled look. "Go in alone, my dear, and remember he is '*the catch* of the season.'" "

"As if I were fishing with hook and line," thought Sada, with superb contempt.

Her visitor was silent after the first words of greeting. Somehow it was not as easy a matter to get through with as he had expected. "Miss Lee, I presume you can imagine the reason of my coming to-day. I have a splendid home, or, that is, I deem you a splendid woman, Miss Lee. A woman in every way worthy to bear my name, and to do the honors of my house. I have enough of this world's goods to provide for you handsomely, and I—why—really—I think a great deal of you." For the man had begun to discover that there had been very little of

the lover in his remarks. "There is no other woman whom I esteem so highly. Miss Lee, when will you come to my heart and to my home?"

Sada raised her hand before he had ceased speaking, but he was too deeply interested in his own words to notice it. "I am very sorry, Mr. Yonge, but the 'one thing needful' is lacking. I do not love you. If I were to marry you, it would be because of your wealth and position. A woman, who could be bought by a handsome home and property, would be little better than a slave. I could not maintain my self-respect after such a bargain, and I am afraid I should grow to hate you."

"Why, Miss Lee, I am really surprised. You have received my attentions, and I thought you were ——" He stopped.

"I am sorry that you think I have encouraged you. I have received your attentions as I have those of others; I cannot see, however, that I have been forward or presuming. I have not been the seeker of attention from anyone. When a woman is sought in society by an honest man, she can but return his courtesy with courteousness."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lee, you have been reserved and ladylike; I am just a little hurt at your refusal, for I had really set my heart upon acceptance." Taking her hand kindly, he said "Good by," and left the house.

"I never was more astonished in my life," he mused, as he walked rapidly down town. "I am mortified, too. That girl is almost a beggar. I hope she will not brag of this; I could not bear the boring of the fellows at the club. I don't believe she will, for she is one girl out of a thousand; I honestly believe she could make a man out of almost any fellow. I wonder if she isn't in love with someone else? It can't be any one in our set. She may live to see the day that she is sorry for this morning's work."

Sada did not join her aunt until luncheon. In answer to the enquiring look, she said: "No, auntie, I could not wrong a man enough to marry him if I did not love him."

"But he is so wealthy, Sada, and together we could have done so much for my poor," she said pathetically.

"We will try and help the poor a great deal, anyway; and, auntie, I shall try and make a home for myself when I am a trouble to you."

"You will never be that, Sada;" and the subject was not mentioned again.

Mr. Grenall was more greatly disturbed than his wife, still he said nothing. Any discussion made him uncomfortable, and his one aim in life was to be comfortable and undisturbed. Sada's life ran smoothly on. Meeting Mr. Yonge frequently, each tried so hard to greet the other in an unconstrained manner, that people began to notice and speculate, but, as there was nothing to feed their curiosity upon, it soon died away.

One evening Sada overheard a conversation between two society leaders. "I wonder why Mr. Yonge ceased his attentions to Sada Lee; she used to seem pleased with his company; but he is quite infatuated with that little Miss Sewell."

"I wonder, too, if Sada doesn't feel badly to lose such a splendid chance." Sada moved away, but the smile on her lips proved that she did not mind at all. Ned's letters came weekly. Mrs. Grenall was loving and kind, and the world was as bright as ever.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TORCH BEGINS TO BLAZE A LITTLE.

"I am getting to like Prof. Pearce real well," said Christa one evening when the trio were discussing the school. "At first I felt as if my hairpins were dancing a jig, he used to give me such dreadful looks when I could not get my problems."

"I like him, too, but really, girls, I'd like to see him cry just once; because it would be a satisfaction to know whether he could or not. Now, Madie, we are waiting for your opinion."

"He has a fine head. When I see him, I think of what Phil wrote about his professor in mental philosophy: 'He is so scholarly, and looks so intellectual, that one could almost graduate looking at him.' Phil's letters sound just like him, don't they?"

"I think he is very original," Aggie answered. "Here we have been talking for nearly an hour, and I have my composition yet to copy." She took up her pen and began to write rapidly.

"I have not written a word of mine," said Madie. She had been chosen by Prof. Pearce to hear a few of the lower classes, and through this effort was already laying plans to keep herself and Christa at school another year. The combined duties of pupil and teacher gave her little time for extra work.

Seated in a low chair before the fire, she began to dream out her subject. "You do not seem to be in any great haste to go to work," said Christa. But her sister was too far away in dreamland to catch the sound of her voice. Yet, before she retired that night, the essay was written.

There were a number of visitors present when the hour came for rhetorical work. Aggie and Christa went bravely through the ordeal. Madie, who had just dis-

missed a class, was called upon. She stepped to the front. When she had finished, Prof. Pearce reached for the essay. "How long did it take you to write this?"

"I wrote it last evening."

"I cannot accept it," he said, handing it back to her. "You should allow your thoughts to crystalize. Write it over again, and we will hear it next week."

With burning cheeks, Madie took the paper and walked to her desk; in her mortification, it seemed to her as if the aisle were a mile in length. A girl who had been her rival ever since she entered school, and was greatly enraged when Madie was chosen assistant, tittered audibly as she passed.

The essay was rewritten, and on the appointed day, Madie went forward to read it. She stood before the school, with her paper in hand, but strive as she would, not one word could she utter. She looked appealingly at the professor; then at the paper; the words swam before her eyes; she shook her head, and her lips quivered painfully. "You may take your seat, Miss Burton." She again sat down, feeling utterly crushed and humiliated; she struggled bravely, but the hot, bitter tears would come. Aggie leaned forward and laid her hand affectionately upon her friend's arm.

Prof. Pearce was surprised and troubled; he had not understood the girl's nature. When the work for the day was completed, he said: "I have a word to say in regard to Madeline's essay. I knew by the first hearing of it, that it had been hurriedly written, and because she could write easily, she was injuring her talent by writing rapidly. An essay is not enjoyable when the tone of it proves that the accent should be thrown on the last syllable. A week ago Madie essayed to give us some beautiful thoughts, but many of the sentences were crude. I wished her to work it out for herself, that she might see the difference. That is, as you all know, what I conceive to be the difference between teaching and learning."

He called upon Madie that evening. "I am very sorry that you misunderstood me. You must think very meanly

of me if you imagine that I did that to humiliate you before the school."

"Please not to mention it at all, Prof. Pearce. I am so very sorry to think I acted so childishly."

"I think, Madeline, that you have a talent in this direction, and one day I hope to see it used, for the benefit of yourself and others."

When he had gone Madie built a wonderful "castle in the air," and, though it tottered many times, it never quite fell to the ground. "Perhaps this is the way in which I may keep my Torch burning," she said to herself triumphantly.

Winter gave place to spring. The bright June days came and opened the doors and windows wide. "I believe days have character and behavior as well as people. I like to have these days come and stay with us. To-day is the longest one of the whole year, but it hasn't seemed half as long as some other days. I wonder where I have lost so much of it?"

"Advertise for a day lost, Madie," said Aggie, readily chiming in with her friend's thoughts.

"I have been a few hundred miles farther east and have wondered how our boys have done on the commencement stage. I have been with them in thought so much to-day."

"Then, if your day has been lost it has been through carelessness; if you had stayed at home and attended strictly to business, you would not now be mourning for lost hours," said Aggie, with a happy little laugh.

The next day, when Madie met her pupils in the classroom, she said brightly: "I want you to sit a moment and look out of the windows. If you haven't noticed before how pretty the day is, you ought to see by her generous light, how beautiful the world is around you." So they rested their hands and saw the shadows floating over the distant prairie, and felt the touch of the young summer, and a bit of gladness came up from each heart, and looked

from the eye, and nestled around each childish mouth. "I believe if they are taught to see the beautiful all around them, that they will not go very far astray. A really bad man or woman will not be a great lover of nature." With this wise conclusion the young teacher went on with the round of her duties.

Mrs. Burton was very glad to have her daughters home for the summer. "It gives me such a restful feeling to have all under the same roof again."

"It is nice to be here all the summer through. As I am to teach a whole half day next year, Christa and I will be able to go right on with our classes, for I can pay our way easily."

"Don't get miserly, little girlie," said mamma, with a smile that indicated both love and appreciation of the small maiden beside her.

"Misers hoard up money and I only love it for what it will bring."

"That's right, Madie," said Mrs. Crowan, who was spending the day with her friends. "I believe if I knew how many days I was going to live, and how much money I was going to have, I'd make my calculations so as to come out even. I can't see anything so very handsome in a lot of bills, unless I can see something real nice behind them that I want to get, and then they look handsome by proxy."

"Here is a letter, Bell." Mr. Burton came in and handed a tinted missive to his wife.

"Hattie has been to the Pacific coast, on her wedding tour; she writes that they will stop over for a few days on their return; they will be here the sixteenth. Why, Frank, that is to-day! You will have to hurry, or you will not get there in time to meet them." Mrs. Burton smoothed her hair as she spoke; she invariably did this when she heard a knock at the door or news of a proposed visit, although her hair always lay so smoothly.

"Let me help you," said Mrs. Crowan.

"There is nothing to do. I have my Saturday's work

done. Our house is so small that it does not take long to arrange it. It was very kind of you to offer."

"Well, I might as well get out of the way before they come," and she began to fold up her work.

"Indeed, you shall not attempt it. The idea of walking this hot day, when your husband expects to call for you on his return."

"If John gets his grist in good season, he will be back before they get here." The good lady settled back to her work. "Just as like as not he won't get here until after dark, though."

CHAPTER XIII.

BOUGHT "READY-MADE."

The visitors came when the frogs were beginning their croak down by the river. Mrs. Crowan twisted her hair and sat bolt upright, as if prepared to meet whatever might come unflinchingly, mentally anathematizing John and the miller for the delay of that grist. Mrs. Burton, with her daughters, met them on the lawn. She kissed her niece tenderly, and presented Madie and Christa; Hattie gave the tips of her fingers to each, and in turn presented her husband. If Mr. Lawrence had been in search of relics, and had suddenly come upon a souvenir of the mound builders, he would not have studied the specimen more coolly nor critically than he did his wife's country relatives. But he saw only a quiet, self-possessed woman and two bright-faced girls.

In the "best room" he found quite a different individual. Mrs. Crowan was disgusted with the lukewarm hand shake, and was on the defensive immediately.

Mr. Burton and the man brought in a huge Saratoga, the first Mrs. Crowan had seen. "If I had known they had such things as that, we would have got one and lived in it, till we got our house built, instead of the wagon," she said to Madie when they were in the kitchen together. The girls laughed at the remark.

"Doesn't she look ever so much younger than her husband?" said Christa.

"She is twenty and he is forty-five, so Sada wrote."

"Girls," said their mother, "you shouldn't talk people over in that way."

"I begun the talk," said Mrs. Crowan, hastening to take the blame upon herself.

Supper was served a little later. Hattie had changed her traveling-dress for an elegant evening costume to

please her husband, who was anxious to have her exhibit as much wealth as possible. "It is really missionary work, my dear. I presume these rustic relatives of yours never saw anything of the sort before."

It was a revelation to her young cousins, this magnificently attired lady, and, with all a woman's love of the beautiful, they enjoyed the picture.

"We must seem very awkward and plain to them," said Christa soberly, but Madie kept on quietly with her work.

"I do not envy her at all, with that husband of hers; he treats her as if she were a fancy article of furniture. It is pitiful to think of a real live girl as being treated in that way! Never to look, or act, or be like a woman. Always to be a doll; I declare, she looked so much like one that I watched for her eyes to open and shut just the way them big ones do in the stores; and I was surprised every time she spoke. She had the awfulest lot of dresses to take out of that big trunk of hers before she got to the right one. I said: 'you must have had lots of sewing to do;' and she laughed and said. 'Oh, most of these were bought ready-made;' and I says to myself, 'that's about the way with you, my girl. The old man had money enough to pay the price, and so he owns you now. I suppose it is a good deal to be the husband of all them fine dresses; but if one of my girls would sell herself the way that girl has, I should feel—considering the price paid—that she wouldn't have much left to give to the Lord after her husband had settled his claims.'" Mrs. Crowan said this to her husband as they were jogging homeward in the moonlight.

"Your girls won't do that; they've got too smart a mother," said John admiringly.

"There, there, John, I wasn't a fishin' for a compliment."

"I know you wasn't, Lizy, but go on with your talk."

"Well, after supper they asked her to play, and she simpered, and he got up and gave her his arm, and she took it and walked to the piano. She turned the music all

over, and then she sat down and struck the piano, and her hands sprung up as if her arms was on springs. She looked down at a streak in the carpet and appeared to study a minute, then she looked up at that little statute on the bracket above the piano, and began to play. She hunted the whole length of the keys as if she was trying to find some extra music, and finally settled down and *treaded* that piano with her hands; then she began to sing, and she did choke and squeal to beat all; I suppose that is opera singing, but I don't like it. Singing ought to be happy work; I can't reconcile it with anything that takes on so awfully as she did. They asked Madie to play; so she went over to the piano, and just caressed and coaxed the music right out of it. She seemed to know just where the best notes was hid, and the keys answered back as sweet, and Bonnie Doon went all through that house and way out doors, it seemed so glad, and I couldn't keep the tears back. When Mrs Lawrence was complimented, she laughed and said: 'I'm not in tune to-night;' and when they praised Madie, she looked at them both, and said in that honest way of hers: 'I am very glad if you liked it; I was afraid you wouldn't.'"

The city guests spent the quiet Sabbath with their relatives. When they found that all could read and write, and were as conversant as themselves with the great men and women of the day, they came down from their heights. Hattie grew natural, and her husband really enjoyed the novelty of the world about him. One day they actually learned that there was a baby in the house; Mrs. Lawrence took her in her arms; Josie talked in her baby dialect, and Mr. Lawrence held his watch to her ear, she crowed and clutched at it. As neither posed for effect, the result was a charming tableau.

On Tuesday they went away. "I really enjoyed it," said Mr. Lawrence.

"And I, too," said Hattie graciously. "My aunt is a lady, and Madie and Christa are nice, lovable girls."

"Madie acts to me like a girl with a mission. I am always afraid of such a one; still, I would gladly lend

her all the assistance in my power if she would confide in me; money might be an object. With her face and voice she ought to marry well," he said complacently; he was about to add: "as you," but thought that it might not sound complimentary to either party, and omitted the last two words.

CHAPTER XIV.

COMPLIMENTS.

The promise of spring was being fulfilled; the raspberries near the house were offering up their rich fruitage; the birds came, and perched, and sang, and helped themselves to the luscious fruit.

"I say, Mr. Burton, I'll get a gun to-night, and to-morrow I can make a finish of them birds; they'll eat every berry if we don't look out," grumbled the farm hand

Madie turned to her father. "They say a great deal about 'Southern hospitality,' don't you think we are just as hospitable at the North. These birds are our summer visitors, and, of course, they must be fed while they stay with us. We ought to feel amply recompensed by the music they give us. Please, papa, do not betray their trust in us."

Mr. Burton said something about "trying to frighten them off in some other way, and that the berries ought to be kept for their own use." But the gun was not brought forward; so the birds alternately sang and scolded from one bush, while Madie gathered the fruit, and tried to echo their song, from another.

One day a cloud obscured the sun, and looking upward, these settlers beheld an army of insects, transparent in the sunlight. In a few hours that broad, beautiful country was a barren waste. A summer's sun shone on a winter landscape. "If the grasshoppers had only stayed and done our fall plowing, after they got through with the harvesting, we'd a got our work all out of the way in good season," said John Crowan, with an effort at cheerfulness.

But who ever knew a community of energetic Americans to be discouraged at one failure? The stock was gathered together and taken to another part of the state

to winter. Generous aid was proffered, and starvation was kept from the door.

Madie and Christa went to work in the school-room with added zeal. At Christmas time, the primary teacher handed in her resignation; the position was tendered to Madie. She gladly accepted. "I should like to keep up with my class, too. Don't you think I can?"

Prof. Pearce, looking down at the uplifted face, answers: "I think you can, my child."

Often the duties seem monotonous, and sometimes Madie thinks she has mistaken her vocation, but more often still, she feels as if it were the grandest thing in the world to be a teacher of these little ones.

Aggie Peyton was going to have a party. All the girls and boys at school were eagerly discussing the great event. In her own home the excitement was intense. "I never attended a real grown-up party. What do they do, Robert?" Christa asked.

"Whatever they think best. I should follow out my own good sense if I were you."

"But I feel as if I hadn't any."

"'What shall I wear?' is, I believe, the great question with the gentler sex," said Robert.

"That is easily settled for Christa and me. Each has one dress for church and one for school. I met Mrs. Valton the other day. I had a veil over my face and she did not recognize me. I bowed. She looked down at my dress and said: 'Why, good morning, Miss Burton!'"

Robert laughed heartily. "Well, Madie, no one could dispute the *individuality* of your dress, after such recognition."

Madie was late home that evening. The girls, eager to make arrangements for the party, were impatient at the delay. "Why are you so late every night?" Christa asked.

"I love to dream an hour in the school-room when my work is done," she explained. "I seem to see the bright faces of the children again, before me. Gathered from dif-

ferent houses, and with so many different trainings and dispositions, they make the day a very busy one. I like to feel the quiet when they have gone and left me. I believe in this quiet hour, that I right many of the otherwise wrong ideas that I may get from the mere routine of school work."

"I think you have explained the reason of your delay quite satisfactory," said Mrs. Peyton.

Christa abruptly changed the subject. "Most everyone in a story book has, at least, one silk dress, or can find some wonderful article in her mother's wardrobe, but we will have to wear our old cashmere dresses."

"Never mind, dear, we will do quite well with what we have," said Madie consolingly.

"The fashion magazines inform us that 'young ladies are trimming party dresses with swan's down;' as Clayton is not a large city, why would not cotton batting answer our purpose?"

"Aggie, you are not at all sensible in your remarks!" remonstrated her matter-of-fact mother.

"The hostess should not be better dressed than her guests, and we will each count as hostess. Therefore, as we've decided not to spend much time on our attire, let us make out the list of people we intend to invite. Madie, you like to write, so you can jot the names down as I give them to you!" Aggie began to count them off rapidly.

Madie laid down her pen, and looked at her friend. "Aggie, you might as well get a list of all the boys and girls in school and copy that, or give a general invitation."

"That would not make them feel as if they were really invited, I'm afraid. I do intend to ask every one, though."

Mrs. Peyton was about to object, but Robert spoke to her, when the others were in earnest conversation. "They are too young to be deeply steeped in sin; a slight is no benefit to anyone; while a kindness often is." So his young sister was permitted to do as she wished.

"There'll be a goodly number of us to come out all to-

gether!" was the gleeful conclusion, when the last invitation had been given and accepted.

Madie had brightened up her own and her sister's toilets with some fresh laces and ribbons. The little locket, given her by the Confederate soldier, was the only ornament she wore. Aggie, loyal to her friends, and considerate of their feelings, was also dressed plainly, but all three were so happy that each one who looked at their bright faces that night did not miss the gay attire.

"If there are any prettier girls than you three, at the party to-night, I'd just like to see 'em!" said Grant Peyton, with boyish admiration, when the trio were waiting in the parlor for the first guests to arrive.

Madie's most devoted attendant that evening was the mayor of the young city, a gay bachelor of thirty.

"You waltz beautifully!" he said, bending low and giving her what he considered a winning smile. Seeing that she was unmoved by the compliment he exerted himself anew.

She was asked to sing, and unhesitatingly seated herself at the piano; though her voice faltered a little, she sang the sweet, old ballad with a naturalness that charmed all who listened. Mayor Harding praised her voice and expression. "I am not at all surprised to hear you render a ballad with so much feeling, after having read your poems."

"I have not written more than one or two," she said.

"But they were veritable little gems." He half guessed that this was Madie's weak point and he cunningly assailed it. "You are not vain over them, I see."

"I hope not; I do indeed," she replied solemnly. "Others have done so much better than I can ever expect to do that I cannot be egotistical over my efforts. But, if it is a work for me to do, this writing out of my thoughts, why ought I not to do it as carefully and as free from vanity as I would do dressmaking or millinery? When they do work well they feel at liberty to say as much. If they are not supposed to be filled with vanity at the harmony of form and color why should I be over

the harmony of words? I believe things can be made melodious to the *eye*."

Prof. Pearce, who had joined them as Madie began speaking, now spoke earnestly. "I think you are right, Madie; whatever work a man or woman can do, and do better than anything else, that is *the* work for him or for her to perform." Madie thanked him with her eyes; his words made her very happy.

Friday evening, when she went home, she told of the compliments she received on her dancing and appearance.

Mrs. Burton, holding Josie in her arms, said gently: "I wonder if this is all!"

"All of what, mamma?"

"The end of all my plans. I have been very proud of my little daughter and anxious to see her educated, and now, after nearly two years at school, she comes home, not telling one word in regard to her essay or school work, only this: that a gay young gentleman flatters her, and says she 'waltzes beautifully.'"

Madie had never received such a rebuke from her mother, and it hurt her more than any words had ever done.

"Mamma, you will never have a chance to say that again. It was very foolish to repeat those words, but he said other words of approval to me, and so did Prof. Pearce; they made me very glad. I did not want to tell you, mamma, for fear you would be disappointed in my work; if I am going to fail in anything I undertake I want to fail alone. I can bear disappointment myself, but I could not for all of my people. I shall never repeat a compliment again. I do not want you to think me frivolous." The last word was said with a sob.

She was only seventeen! Mrs. Burton put Josie in her cradle, took her eldest daughter in her arms, and soothed her with loving words. "I misjudged you, darling, and I am very sorry that I was so hasty in my conclusions!"

"Talk about the duty of children to parents! They, of course, owe a great deal to them," she said, when relating the incident to Mrs. Crowan. "But parents owe some-

thing to children. I never asked forgiveness of anyone more willingly than I did of my daughter at that time, and it strengthened the bond of love between us. If I had held myself aloof, she would have smarted under the injustice, and something of a barrier would have inevitably been raised between us; then she would have ceased confiding in me. Mothers and daughters should be very near to each other, always."

CHAPTER XV.

ALMA MATER.

They were all together singing college songs and relating college jokes, occasionally varying the programme with the calling up of some army reminiscence by someone who had worn the honored blue. Many of them had been there during the entire course; some had entered after being "mustered out;" a few were in the law class; one had come up from the medical college, where he had taken his first year of lectures, to attend commencement, and no one enjoyed the reunion more than this prospective M. D.

"Phil, if you'll be quiet, we will have some speeches." Ned laughingly drew him back into a seat as he spoke.

"That is demanding altogether too much!" said Ray Burton, quietly amused at his brother's jokes.

"Let us hear from Mills," called one of the gay company.

"Yes, let the professor speak!" cried the irrepressible Phil. "He and I can compare notes, we have both been in the dissecting-room, although he has only studied the anatomy of words."

"To-morrow we leave the old chapel on the hill; let us have two minute speeches. Philips, as you are a lawyer, you are the one to put the case," suggested another.

Ned spoke briefly; Ralph, who had been a tutor in the school during the year since graduation, and had been studying to fit himself for his chosen profession, followed with a few appropriate parting words.

Ray said simply: "I am beyond speech, boys; I only wish you all a hearty God-speed!"

"You see, my brother sums you up as he would a column of figures!" said Phil, mounting the rostrum. "Boys, I should like to make a speech, but my time will

not permit; someone may be in front of my office, reading my sign, and wondering what sort of a physician I am, and I feel as if I ought to be there to tell him. If any of you were to need medical advice, I would say that it will be given gratis to members of my class. Remember this, and do not risk your precious lives with quacks. Excuse me for 'talking shop,' but at present it seems absolutely necessary."

Phil paused, and cries of "go on! go on!" resounded through the room. It was well known that Phil's office was, as yet, "moored in Spain," but they were all boyish enough to appreciate his words. The young medical student went on in a changed tone.

"Honestly, boys, I did not think it would be so hard to say good by. The seniors and juniors were very intimate last year, and to-day it is hard to realize to which class I really belonged. If I were not so big I'd cry, besides it is a bad thing for the eyes. I could explain, but it would be difficult to simplify it down to your comprehension. For every good thing that may come into the life of each I shall be glad, and for every misfortune I shall have a feeling of sadness. Next to family ties are the ties of those who have been working together for years with a oneness of purpose as we have been."

The cheering had subsided, and instead of gay, rollicking college boys, a group of men stood looking out into the future, from those college doors, eager, yet dreading, to step forth to meet the work and care that was coming toward them.

"The Future has her hands full of something for each of us, but we'll have to go a little farther on to learn what it is," said Ralph soberly.

"I believe that I am wretchedly happy, for I never was so sorry in being glad, nor so happy in being sad, as at the present time," said Phil, while the mixture of mirth and sadness in his voice and face gave correct expression to his words.

"I think we are all decided on a profession or plan of work, except Marvin. I haven't heard you say a word,"

Ned turned as he spoke to a dapper little fellow, whose perfumed locks were parted in the middle, and whose lavender neck-tie was tied in the most approved style.

"I haven't decided yet. I supposed you all knew that I was not *obliged* to do *anything*. I shall interest myself in something, I presume. I think I shall travel for a year, and after that, if I find any business worth paying my whole attention to, I shall take it up." He leaned back gracefully against one of the pillars, as if the conversation were ended.

"Let me make a suggestion, Marvin; if you go to Paris, why not have an interview with Worth, perhaps you could 'get in' with him." The others laughed heartily at Phil's advice, and Marvin good-naturedly joined in. If one were to be offended at college jokes, there would be little room for aught but an exhibition of temper.

"I know, Phil, that I do have an eye to color, and it is positively painful for me to see a lady who is not well dressed."

"But let me tell you, sir, you are just the kind of man who would ridicule a woman for paying her whole time and attention to dress and for being extravagant. Let me see, weren't you the man who debated against female suffrage, taking the ground that 'ladies were more greatly interested in style than in statesman?' Now you show your good sense (?) by noting and praising ladies of that stamp. Women, as a rule, are fond of admiration, and it is always the best dressed girl in a ball-room who gets the most invitations to dance. Men who pay their homage to fashionable women only, will be very apt to get them for wives, and ought not to complain afterward."

"Well done, Phil! I didn't know that you had ever paid so much attention to affairs of the heart."

Phil turned to his cousin and said, "I am only theorizing. I have never been 'hard hit' yet, but you might as well confess and show us the picture that you treasure so carefully." Ned assumed an expression of innocent surprise.

"I presume I shall marry, and I shall try to select a woman who can hold her own in good society——"

"That is, if she will accept your offer, Marvin," Phil broke in.

"Oh, well, few girls would refuse a good home and position."

"I know several that I think would do that very thing, if the incumbrance of a man, to be thrown in, did not suit them." The boys were listening attentively; in a student's curriculum of fun, a lark stands first, and next comes a discussion.

"If you could order a wife as you would a bill of groceries, you would call for beauty, style, grace, submission, a moderate amount of talent, a superfluous amount of accomplishments." As Phil mentioned each of these attributes, he looked at Marvin, and after the nod of approval was given, wrote it down. "Amiability, modesty—certainly a woman must be modest—and 'last but not least,' clingingly dependent. Here we have quite an array. I am not sure that even with this tabulation, a girl would not get the poorest of the bargain with most of us. My list would read a little differently, but I believe I should call for more than I have written down. How humble we men are, after all. Marvin wants a doll that can dance, and smile, and subserve to his rule. He'll get one! But, boys, I believe there is nothing that I would so soon tire of as a chronic smile. A society girl smiles at everything that is said, and at everyone who says it, yet she is exactly what a society man ought to get; they'll have no domestic life; they'll have a place to stay, when they are not out in society, and they will call it home. There they can be just as disagreeable and fault-finding as they choose, but they will be all smiles and devotion in company, and the world will call them a 'happy couple.' For my part, I like to feel happy and comfortable at home. I haven't a particle of respect for a man who has to put his fingers on the pulse of society to discover how he is feeling himself."

Phil waxed eloquent, and was greeted with great applause and cries of "Hear! Hear!"

"What kind of a woman will you marry, Phil?"

"A woman with a heart and soul, if she'll have me. One that will smile on me as often as she does on the outside world. There are plenty of girls of this description to-day, although I am afraid there is a gradual decrease, owing to lack of appreciation of the article."

Marvin shrugged his shoulders. "I couldn't endure a woman who would have an opinion on every subject; they always speak so loud and coarse."

"I think you imagine that, or have heard someone who should be classed with prehistoric fossils make that remark; I had almost forgotten to make a tabulation of your attributes to offset the list I hold in my hand. You have money, a graceful figure, waltz elegantly, are well educated, possess a beautiful home and are troubled with dyspepsia; to be sure, the latter isn't a great acquisition, but it is something that sticks to a fellow in gay society, and it will serve to make you an object of sympathetic interest to the ladies. Don't be at all alarmed, it isn't dangerous in the least, people have often been known to live longer with it than without it."

"Come, come, Phil, you are talking 'shop' again. Let us give three cheers and a tiger for *Alma Mater*." Hats were tossed recklessly, and the building resounded with the shout. They filed out, through the broad hall and over the stone threshold, "worn by the tread of many feet."

The day burned slowly out; beyond the lake the water was crimson; the point lay in a flood of light, and the wood-fringed city sat peacefully upon her hills. The students had been familiar with the scene for years, they had drawn near to nature in that lovely spot, but its beauty struck them more forcibly than ever to-night.

Ralph uncovered, and turned slowly around as if he were photographing each familiar object upon his memory. "They tell of Italian sunsets, was there ever any view more beautiful than this?" he exclaimed, and the group standing with him said "No."

CHAPTER XVI.

FULL OF SURPRISES.

"Only nine days more of school," said Madie, tying on her broad-brimmed hat. "Only nine times to say good morning and good night to my boys and girls; so I must linger over each one."

"Why, Madie, you will be with them all next year, if you are going to be first assistant."

"I know, Aggie, but it will not be the same room nor the same year, and, although it will be a better position, I feel sorry to lose these little ones."

On Saturday the class went botanizing with Professor Pearce for the last time. A grand tramp through the woods, along the bank of the river. The day played an accompaniment, and the heart of each sang a song of joy.

Peace was written on river, wood, and sky, and hushed the universe with its blissful quiet.

"See how still the birds are," said Christa.

"I think we all must be Lotus-eaters to-day. I do not believe the birds can fly or sing if they try," said Aggie laughingly.

"It is quite a different trip from the one six weeks ago; the flowers proved themselves wiser than we were, for they did not show their faces here that day."

Professor Pearce looked at Madie while she was speaking. "Your face indicates so much happiness to-day, that I have found myself wondering many times what was the reason of your great joy."

"Just the day," she answered simply.

"What a lovely day it is," said Aggie, removing her hat.

"I believe you have made that remark a half dozen times, at least," said her brother, who was one of the party.

"I think we have all done that. It seems to me that I never knew a lovelier spring than this has been." As she spoke, Christa stooped and bathed hands and face in the clear water of the river.

"You will hear that sentence every bright spring day as long as you live."

"Well, perhaps it isn't original, Robert. I can't express myself as wittily as Aggie, nor as practically as Madie, but I can feel it all."

"I believe you can. Add these flowers to your collection, please. I have been trying to find some wild honeysuckles for you, but there doesn't seem to be any."

"There is a lady with both hands full, but she will not offer any to us," said one of the school-boys.

The lady, walking slowly down the woodland path, sees the group of young people, and comes toward them. "You are out botanizing, too, and I have gathered all there is of this variety; they are great favorites of mine. I could not bear to leave them here to 'waste their sweetness.' I can supply each one." She broke off the rich clusters and distributed them, receiving hearty thanks in return.

Madie, standing apart from the rest, said, when taking the proffered flowers: "Thank you, I like you very much for this."

"Do you, my dear? Then I hope to see more of you, for I like to be liked," the stranger said pleasantly.

"There, Charlie Layton, I guess you will acknowledge you were mistaken; there are too many such people in the world to allow one to be a successful cynic. Often, in dark moods, we allow petty circumstances to overshadow and occupy a greater place in our minds than little deeds of kindness; we are apt to take the latter as a matter of course, and let them go unheeded, proving, by our indifference, that they are more common than bad acts; it is the exception, and not the rule, that we notice. If that lady had passed by without offering her flowers to us, we would have thought, and some of us would undoubtedly have said: 'How selfish that is.'" Madie was advocating a cherished principle, and spoke earnestly.

"I like her," said Christa; "and if I should never see her again, I'll be her friend for always."

"I think," Robert Peyton was speaking, "that she has made the bright, sunny day brighter and sunnier; her deed, word, and smile cannot be separated in my memory of her, but sink way down in my heart and make me feel kindly disposed toward the world."

The lady, destined to figure so conspicuously in the life of one of that group, went on her way.

Another day passed through the western gateway, into the broad fields of the Past, as our party reached home.

"Tired, yes," in response to Mrs. Peyton's query; "but very glad we went;" while the flowers looked brightly from the vases on the table, and seemed to say: "Of course you are glad you went; if you hadn't gone we would not be here to-night." Madie held up one little flower face after another. "It seems too bad to pull them to pieces just to find out their names, when they nodded to us so prettily to-day in the woods, as if they knew us ever so well without an introduction."

"We all have to be pulled to pieces, somehow, somewhere, in order to classify us," said Aggie.

The next week Clayton Academy celebrated its first commencement. Three strangers entered and took a seat in the rear of the hall, directly after the opening exercises. When the third speaker was called, they leaned forward and listened eagerly. Aggie read her essay and again seated herself with her class. "She did nicely," said one of the trio.

"There is Madie. Don't you see?"

"She has the valedictory," said the third, referring to his programme.

The girlish voice trembled with emotion and fright, but not a few in that vast audience were moved by her earnest, parting words.

The diplomas were awarded and the three gentlemen arose to leave the room. "We do not want to meet them here," said the youngest, who was the spokesman of the party.

At that moment the President of the Board of Trustees stepped to the front and called "Madeline Burton;" the slight figure in her shining white dress came forward. He made a brief speech, setting forth the advantages of education, and the extreme pleasure he felt in being there that evening, and how greatly he appreciated the honor conferred upon him by being chosen to represent his associates to make a few remarks to the graduating class; while Madie, standing wondering and embarrassed before him, was puzzled to discover the reason of her being selected as a target for all eyes. "In order," he continued, "to stimulate you to renewed effort, and to show the appreciation of all for the work done, I wish to express the hearty approval of every member of the Board, to each and every member of this class; but there is one young lady, who has served as a teacher for nearly two years, and continued with her class; doing the entire work in a highly creditable manner. At a meeting a short time since we voted to give a prize to the one who read the best essay on the commencement stage; as chairman of the committee to judge the effort, I present this purse to Miss Burton. It was difficult to choose, but, taking all things into consideration, I think we will but voice the feelings of the audience when we make the award to her." Turning to Madie he said, "take it my child; you have earned it."

There were tears in eyes and voice when she replied: "I thank you all so much, and I hope in the years to come, I may so work that you will not recall to-night with wonder; I am very glad for myself, and more than all for my people. Believe me, I appreciate it."

"Give us one song, please," said Mayor Harding, who was seated on the platform. Madie hesitated.

"Sing 'Home, Sweet Home,'" called a voice from the audience.

She started; the voice had a familiar ring. The accompanist struck the chords, and Madie sang the words she loved so well, with an expression all her own, making home seem nearer and dearer to every listener.

Aggie looked over the heads of the audience, and saw

the three young men, waiting near the door. "There are Ned and Phil Burton and Ralph Mills, I am sure," she whispered to herself.

"Madie's got just the voice for dying pieces," said Benjie, trying to stand up in his chair, and being held down by Bert, whose face burned with mortification.

Little Josie, on her mother's knee, listened to the familiar song and cooed, "sissy dea," while the audience smiled in sympathy.

"Look there!" One of the three unknown nudged another, and both looked at the third.

"I've learned a secret," said the younger man.

"I have known it for years; it has grown right up with him," returned his companion. The tall young gentleman looked at the fair singer, and forgot that there were any others in the world but they two.

A hush followed the song—the most sincere applause an audience can give. Aggie looked again for those familiar faces, but they had disappeared. "I must have been mistaken; yet I am positive it was their faces that I saw."

Madie came to her from a circle of friends, who had pressed forward with congratulations. "Aggie, who called for that song?"

Aggie with a perplexed look answered: "I cannot tell."

"Are you going to congratulate 'em, Lizy?"

"No, indeed, John. I'll see both of 'em to-morrow and can tell 'em how I enjoyed the whole of it. I know them and they know me; but I ain't a goin' to elbow my way through that crowd, just to prove to the audience that we're acquainted."

"Well, then, we might as well be gittin' along. You're losin' a hairpin on t'other side, Lizy."

Mr. Crowan drove the wagon close to the sidewalk, and helped his wife up to the spring seat. "Now, Lizy, if we drive on kind o' brisk, we'll get to see 'em when we go by Mr. Burton's."

"Hold on, sir. Are you Mr. Crowan?"

"That's my name."

"We thought we knew you. We have learned so much

of you through Madie's letters. We are anxious to go to Mr. Burton's to-night, if you will kindly direct us. These gentlemen are, my cousin, Phil Burton, and my friend, Ralph Mills."

"And you are the one they call Ned?" said Mrs. Crowan turning and reaching a hand to each. "I am right glad to see you."

"If you can stand oxen and a lumber wagon, climb right in and we will take you clear to the door. We've just been to see Madie graduate; she done splendidly," said John Crowan.

"Yes, we thought so," said Phil, as he climbed into the wagon.

"Oh, you were there, were you? Well, I guess you wasn't disappointed in her," said Mrs. Crowan as the oxen swung to the four cardinal points, on their homeward journey.

"We certainly were not, unless happily so. She looks a little older and more thoughtful."

"Yes, Madie has been alive all these years. People make such an awful fuss about Rip Van Winkle's twenty years' sleep. I know lots of folks who have been asleep all their lives. Nothing seems to wake 'em up. Now, there's Madie; she's quiet lots of times, and she dreams some, too, but she wakes out of it all the brighter. She makes everyone she talks with sure that she has felt every hour of her life; there ain't a day that she feels nothing, does nothing, and is nothing. I don't believe she ever drew a blank minute." Mrs. Crowan bobbed her head around as she talked, until every hairpin stood straight out with excitement.

"Maybe I've said more than I ought to, right out to strangers, but I haven't said half I'd like to. John's smile, when I'm a talking, always urges me on to say too much," she thought as they drove along slowly.

"John, don't you think you can make the oxen go a little faster? I suppose you gentlemen would like to beat the folks home."

"Never mind, we boys can call on them after they get

home, just as well as to be there to receive them." All three smiled as Ralph spoke, in joyous anticipation of the welcome.

Madie and Christa went back to Mr. Peyton's to prepare for the homeward trip.

"Come home with us, Aggie. I feel disappointed about something; although I can't tell what. I am surely not ungrateful for what I have received to-night. There, someone has come!" and Madie started nervously.

"Only papa and mamma have come for us. Madie, darling, what is the matter?" asked Christa, putting her arm around her sister.

"Nothing; I believe I have seen a ghost; no, only heard one," she said, laughing hysterically. Christa looked at her in amazement. "I will tell you after a while; this question will have to do for now. If you should dream of seeing someone that you hadn't seen for a long time, and of hearing him speak, and should wake up to find it a *dream*, if it had seemed *real* just for a minute, don't you think you would be disappointed?"

"There, there, Madie, I'll go home with you. We must both feel a little lost on leaving school, for you have expressed my feelings exactly."

"I think I had better not graduate, if this is the way one is to act," said Christa.

"Mr. and Mrs. Crowan were there. I was glad to see them in the audience, for I had rather have her opinion than any others, except my own people," said Madie as they were going home.

"You'll get it, 'unbiased, straight way of the cloth,' as she says. I noticed them when you were on the stage; she and her husband never looked away from you, only to glance at each other and nod their heads approvingly. I didn't see them while I was reading."

"There they are now," said Bert, who was as alert as a man on picket duty. "They've got someone in with them."

"You can go by," Mr. Crowan called. Mr. Burton turned out and drove rapidly by. They noticed

some dark objects in the rear of the wagon. The others wondered 'what neighbors had attended the exercises in company with the Crowans;' but Aggie, in that one brief glance, aided by a woman's intuition, was satisfied that she had not been mistaken in the faces she had seen that night.

While Madie was arranging her bouquets, there came a rap at the door; Mr. Burton opened it. "Good evening, sir; could you keep some travelers to-night?"

"I do not know, but will speak to my wife."

Madie went to her father. "Ask them in, papa." He threw the door wide open. "Ned, Phil, Ralph! Don't you know the boys, mamma?"

Phil and Ned kissed their aunt and cousins, and Ralph greeted Mrs. Burton and Christa as tenderly, but when Madie came to him with upturned face, he only took her hand in his. "He doesn't seem a bit glad to see me, and I was as glad to see him as I was to see the others," she thought. When she spoke to him again she called him Mr. Mills.

"You saw us, didn't you, Aggie?" Phil asked.

"Yes."

"I was afraid you did."

"Mr. Mills, it was you who called for 'Home, Sweet Home!'"

"Yes, Madie, I called for the song. But I am Ralph to you and all those here."

Madie wondered again.

"We are out looking up a situation, and left the rest of our party to make you a visit, promising to join them when they reached the foot of the mountains. I shall have to take another course of lectures; but I thought I would travel with the rest, and be ready to locate when I get through." Phil gave this in explanation of their sudden appearance; then began to recall by-gone days with Aggie.

"One song, please, Madie, before we separate for the night," urged Ned.

"What shall it be?"

"Anything you like."

She sang "Home Again," so sweetly, and with such a glad ring in her voice, that all gathered around the piano.

"I declare; I don't know whether we are expected to laugh or cry; I feel a little like doing both."

"Phil, it doesn't take long to discover that you haven't changed during the past four years."

"No, Aunt Bell, I think I am much the same, only a little wiser, of course; and my moustache, don't you think it vastly becoming?"

"It doesn't seem to me to *be coming* very vast."

"Aggie, that is too bad! Come, we haven't heard you sing."

"I have a severe cold, and am all out of practice. I only sing a little for my own amusement," she said mischievously.

"Please sing one song, for the days gone by."

She went to the piano and sang a school song, sung by them all years ago.

"Oh, come, come away! The school bell now is ringing." Each one joined in, singing it as if the years had been but a dream, and they were all children together; in Aggie's voice there was not even a shade of sadness.

"Has any old fellow got mixed with the boys?" she asked, quoting from her favorite Holmes.

Ned drew Madie down beside him for a little earnest talk, such as they had been accustomed to in the old days. Ralph, for the first time, felt a strangeness among these people whom he knew and loved so well. "I thought she had not changed, but she has; her cousins are more to her than I am," he thought, as he saw Madie and Ned together.

Madie sat by the window, looking sadly at the young moon fading out in the west. The cool greeting of the friend, who had been her counselor for eight years, troubled her. The pain was the more hard to bear because she was sure that the girls had noticed it, although they had said nothing. They proved by their very silence that

they did not wish to hurt her feelings by mentioning it. She had dreamed so many times of meeting him, and of telling him things that she could not make real in her letters, and now that she had met him, she could think of nothing to say, and wondered if it would be the same the next day. She had yet to learn that people after having been separated for some time, though ever so good friends at parting, often feel a constraint at meeting, and it takes time to drop into the old grooves from which the separation lifted them.

Ralph, in his room, was also thinking soberly, taking no part in the felicitous expressions of the cousins, who were overjoyed at the re-union. "What is the matter, Ralph? You are as glum as can be! What has happened to make you cross?"

"I am only quietly sober, Phil," he answered slowly. The gay conversation continued about him, while he went along the paths of memory, and noted a land-mark here and there, which told him that his favorite pupil had been in his thoughts for years. It had been an undefined feeling before, but now he understood. "I ought to have greeted her as I did the others, and I would if I had met her before I heard her read and sing; after that I could not without discovering my secret to all of them. She is too young; her mother would not like her to know. She shall be my dear little sister for a long time yet; I would not ask her to share my poverty, even if she were older." "What if some other one should come and claim her?" He answered the thought with another. "If she would be happier—if that is the way it is to be—I shall give her up, but I believe it is foreordained," and a smile lurked in his eyes.

"Madie, your horse is a beauty, and I will break him to the saddle."

"I shall be very glad to have you, Ned." They had been viewing the new home in the light of the morning sun.

After breakfast, true to his promise, Ned saddled the colt and mounted him. Leon reared and plunged. "Care-

fully, Ned, I do not wish this visit to terminate in broken bones," said Mrs. Burton. The horse, learning that a firm hand was guiding him, soon grew quiet and cantered down the lawn, out on the prairie.

"Aunt Bell, you have an extensive door-yard," said Phil, looking away over the rolling plain.

"We had our house built to face the West. I did not want to come way out here, and turn our house back as if we were homesick for the East," she answered with a smile.

Mr. Burton had an errand to the city that morning, and, to the surprise of his visitors, did not ask one of them to accompany him. He drove directly to the telegraph office and sent a message eastward over the wires. "Will you wait for an answer?" enquired the operator.

"No; I will drive back this evening."

The boys had taken hoes immediately after his departure and had made a good showing in the corn-field. "I don't want you to go to work as soon as you get here," he remonstrated as he drove up. "You have done so much, however, that I will loan my man to Mr. Crowan for a day, as he is trying to do without help this season."

'Let him go for the entire time we are here. We can do all there is to be done and have plenty of time for recreation besides," urged Ned. Mr. Burton looked doubtfully at the others.

"Oh, we are agreed. We have talked it all over. Ned isn't the only energetic one here," said Phil coolly.

"We are going visiting and fishing, and are bound to have a good time generally, but it is work to-day."

The day that had begun so brightly proved itself to be like some people: it would not bear acquaintance, and the afternoon was rainy and disagreeable. Mrs. Burton looked anxiously from the window. "I wonder if it will clear away so you can go to Clayton as you intended, Frank?" The young people marveled at her eagerness, when he had been there only that morning.

The sun struggled through the clouds to say good night, leaving a fringe of gold and crimson around each.

Nature had finished her bath, and a clean, beautiful world went quietly to rest. "One good thing in having a house built way out doors—as this one is—you are able to see what Nature is doing all around you," said Phil, who was watching the clouds roll away.

"Where are the clouds going to now?" asked Benjie.

"Going to wash somewhere else," Phil answered promptly. A smile was on each face. Josie, noticing the expression, clapped her hands and laughed loudly. "There, little one, you appreciate your cousin." He caught her in his arms and tossed her high above his head.

Mrs. Burton went out to meet her husband when he returned.

"Did you get an answer?"

"Yes."

"Is she coming?"

"Yes."

"When? Why don't you tell it all, Frank?"

"Thursday," he answered, smiling.

"I do hope she will not disappoint us."

She went back to the others with a glad look on her face.

"I think Aunt Bell must have found the fountain that De Leon sought, she looks so young and bright to-night," said Ned, who had caught her look.

"I feel young. Why should I not, when all my boys and girls are around me?"

"You are one of the few who can grow old gracefully," he said admiringly.

The June Sabbath came in all its freshness and beauty. "There is, as mamma often says, 'such a difference in silences,'" Madie thought. "It was so hard and uncomfortable the other night, but to-day it is so sweet and peaceful. A quiet must be both within and without in order to be felt. One can have such a restful feeling when with loved ones. I had rather sit quietly here with my own people all about me, than to talk to any other, but I am afraid that this is somewhat selfish."

The responses had never seemed so sweet and solemn to the young man kneeling at Madie's side, as on this Sabbath morning. The Apostolic creed in that clear, reverent voice, how could one doubt or be sceptical of her faith, at least? The *Te Deum* rolled through the church and up and away on wings unseen. A soul, a prayer, and a divine melody are the only things on "the earth beneath" that are beyond the law of gravitation.

"It seems to me that Heaven is so near to-day, it would be no pain to die," said Madie, when they left the church.

That evening she was playing softly, weaving sweet fancies into sweeter melody. Ralph looked through the doorway and saw that she was alone; he went in and stood beside her. "Madie, I want to thank you for your songs and for your revelation of faith. I think I shall never be sceptical again, although I have been a few times in my life."

"Why, Ralph, you speak as if you liked me," she cried.

"*Like* you, Madie!" He stopped suddenly. His first impulse had been to tell her how the thought of her had been woven in with his plans through years of danger and years of peace, but he thought of his resolution on that first evening. "Like you, little sister, never doubt it, no matter what comes, do not be afraid to tell your 'big brother' everything," jestingly, lest she should understand more of his feelings than he wished. His words made the warm-hearted girl very happy.

Mrs. Burton seemed to be anxious to postpone the fishing excursion indefinitely. Monday, she "could not spare her daughters." Tuesday, she was "anxious to have a visit with all, at home." Wednesday, "the baking, and Josie must be taken care of." Thursday, another excuse was given. "You may go to-morrow, I solemnly promise," she said, noticing the disappointment which all were striving to hide.

Mr. Burton went to the village. "I never knew Uncle Frank to travel around so much before. I wonder if he

isn't trying for some office," said Ned. "I believe I'll go and visit with Aunt Bell." He found her preparing dessert for dinner.

"This pudding used to be a favorite of Sada's. I wonder if it would be now!" She glanced from the window while she was speaking; "Frank is coming, and there is a lady with him. Will you please go out and meet them? I am busy, you see." Ned obediently went.

Mr. Burton had already assisted his companion to alight, and the tall, stylish lady was coming toward the house. "They never told me Ned was here," she said aloud, though there was no one to hear her.

He hurried forward. "Sada!" It was a brief speech, but voice and smile were eloquently expressive.

Mrs. Burton met them at the door. "My dear, I am very glad indeed to see you! go into the parlor quietly."

They were trying a new piece of music; a shadow fell across the keys. Madie looked up, "Sada Lee!" The music was on the floor and Sada was surrounded.

"Children, do let her have time to breathe," said Mrs. Burton.

"Mamma, you knew it all the time!"

"I must confess that I did. I wanted to see you all together, so Frank telegraphed for her to come now, instead of waiting until fall, as she intended doing."

"Aunt Bell, you are the most considerate person I ever knew."

"I hope that you have forgiven me, Phil, for postponing your fishing party until the last arrival."

"Indeed I have. But I did think that you were acting queerly."

"So I was, yet there was a reason for it."

"Listen!" said Christa. "Bert or Benjie is hurt!"

They went to the door in time to see both boys dragging a small curly-headed youth to the house.

"Be careful, my sons! Harry is a little boy and is not accustomed to such treatment."

"He says he is just as glad as we are," said Benjie, and he certainly looked pleased.

"Well," said Phil, "I shall not be surprised at anything after this; if all my relatives would walk in, I should only say, 'just as I expected.'"

"Mrs. Burton goes on the plan, 'the more the merrier.'"

"Yes, Ralph, when they are congenial, and I think this party is."

The events of the years of absence were recapitulated. "I thought I had written everything, but it seems that I did not give an outline," said Sada.

Josie came into the room in her uncertain baby way. "Whom does she resemble?" Sada took her up as she spoke, and looked into the blue eyes so earnestly studying her face. Who has not felt the close scrutiny of a baby's eyes? "See, she is going to take me on trust!" as baby laid her head contentedly back on her shoulder.

"She has the same way of looking at one, that Madie had when she was small," said Ned.

"I think Madie has the same childish look now," said Sada, speaking in a low tone, that Madie might not hear.

CHAPTER XVII.

PLEASANT DAYS AND PEOPLE TO MATCH.

Robert Peyton joined his friends early the next morning, and eight happy young people started for the river.

"I will stay on shore," said Madie. "I cannot bear to fish; it seems so cruel to catch them with a bait; we take advantage of their trust, and I can't do that, either with men or animals. I shall feel more comfortable here."

The others argued and coaxed in vain. "I would do almost anything to please you, but I cannot do this."

"I think she is right," said Sada. "I do not like to fish either."

"It is so to be, and we ought not to mind," Christa philosophized.

"I like to fish, and am always delighted to catch one, although I do feel a little sorry for them," declared Aggie.

"Those who are eager 'to try a fisherman's luck' will please take this boat; the rest of you can 'row down the river in that little red canoe,'" and Phil reached to help Aggie into the first boat, Robert assisted Christa and the four rowed away from the bank.

"Meet us at the bluff for luncheon," called Madie.

"Girlie," said Ned, speaking to his cousin, "you are the only one familiar with the scenery along this river. Where shall we go?"

"I think it is very pretty on the lake, and the Bluff is to be our destination, so we had better row in that direction."

It was only a widening of Silver River, but the steep, rocky banks of gray limestone made a picturesque view.

"I shall make a heavy deposit in Memory to-day. Its golden treasures will gild many a solitary hour," Ralph said, in a tone of quiet content.

They rowed close to the shore; the waves were on their good behavior and allowed the rocks "to receive," but there were many days when it would be impossible for a boat to venture near the headland without being dashed to pieces; when the waves would lose all control of themselves and berate the rocks in thunder tones. They rowed fearlessly up to them and noted the deep indentures, a voiceless proof that "constant dropping wears away stone;" listened to the musical ripple of the waves as they glided in and out of the cavern, as if trying to embrace the gray old rock.

"See the waves go up in such a persistent way, as if to say to that overhanging rock, 'you'll yield this time;' then glide back and return again, and there is a place where a portion of the bank has fallen into the water, and the waves are rejoicing over the victory they have struggled years to gain."

"Yes, Madie, and I see that that great rock is as little affected by the wavelets going and coming as this great world would be if I should drop out of existence to-day, a little mark and moisture for a time; then all would be as before."

"Why, Ned, how solemn you are to-day," said Sada, with a sympathetic look. They moored their boat and climbed the steep bank, gathering many a souvenir of moss and rock. "I wish I might get a view of this scene 'to have and to hold forever.'"

"When Christa has taken lessons I am sure she will sketch it for you willingly. I would if I could, but I have no talent in that direction; my grass looks like needles, and my sky like blue cambric. So you see it would never do for me to make the attempt, even to please you, Sada."

Ned and Sada strolled along the bank; Madie sat down, and taking off her hat, leaned her head against the trunk of a large oak. The waves murmured on in a contented monotone.

"What makes you so quiet?" Ralph asked, after a pause.

"I don't know; such a day as this I am always dumb. I shall think of so many things when you are gone that I failed to say to you."

"I believe we do procrastinate in conversation as much as anything. What is it you wished to say, something of the past?"

"No, I think not. The days have been very monotonous, and yet, no two were exactly alike; each brought a new thought, word, or deed to distinguish it from the others. Some days have seemed so much like nothing to me that I have felt as if I ought to label them that they might not be entirely forgotten."

"Uneventful days, or those that seemed so while they were passing, have often come back to me with many recollections. I see a particular view that I did not notice at the time, but it must have made an impression upon my mind's eye, for I can recall both time and place; a turn in a road, an odor, or some jesting word, have caused me to live again a number of so-called monotonous days, but the memory of which I heartily enjoy."

"Hal-l-o-o-o!"

"That is Phil's shout," said Madie, springing to her feet and waving her hat.

"Here are the hungry fishermen. Come!" Ralph's call brought Sada and Ned to the bank.

"Let us build a fire and roast our fish on forked sticks, just as we read of," said Phil, gathering bits of dry wood together.

"Each take a piece," said Aggie, who was enjoying the day immensely. The wind blew the ashes in their faces, but each one succeeded in roasting a slice of fish.

"Are ashes healthy?" inquired Robert Peyton of the Doctor.

"Yes, when mixed with grease and water," was the reply.

"They make a poor *eye-water*," said Aggie, giving a double meaning to the words, as she wiped the tears away.

"Prescribe for us, Phil," said Ned.

"Plenty of out-door exercise is good where the heart is affected."

Such a luncheon as they had, on that point overlooking the river.

"To-morrow you girls will have a chance to emulate Maud Muller," said Ned; "for we are going to

'Rake the meadow o'er with hay.'

"I shall not be here, and I doubt about the Judge's putting in an appearance," said Aggie.

"I think that is a sweet poem."

"Yes, Sada; it is sweet, but you must own that the Judge and Maud, both, were very susceptible, and he was decidedly selfish."

"The last stanza will live as long as our language lives," said Ned, quoting it in his deep, rich voice

"Madie, please repeat that selection from the *Vision of Sir Launfal*, that you learned before school closed—

'And what is so rare as a day in June?'

Madie recited the poem as Christa requested.

"That is beautiful! It fits the time and place. Nature stands near to listen to the words of praise given her," said Ralph, when she had finished.

"Here we are, above it all. It is nice to climb up and look down on everything; although it never looks so nice when we are in the midst of it. Life may look very bright to us when we look back or down upon it, but it seems very tame just now."

"Robert," said Phil, wringing his hands, "I beg of you, do not talk protoplasm nor molecular force, nor the *whenness* nor *whatness* of anything. Let us be plain, common people, for one day, at least. I don't feel a particle like soaring. We must get our party together and go in search of a few more of the finny tribe to take home with us. Madie, I see, eats fish!"

"I do, but I will not catch them. Call me inconsistent, if you wish. I shall not mind it at all. I cannot kill any harmless animal, nor stand by and see it killed."

"We accept your explanation, and you are welcome to

a full share of the spoils," said Robert, as they went back to the boat.

"We will meet you at the landing where we started, at sundown," said Phil.

Ned and Sada were again separated from the two who remained on shore.

Madie told her former teacher of the Torch she was bearing. "I wish you the utmost success. If your little brand ever grows dim, let me know and I will assist you."

"I think I shall be able to do considerable with my next year's salary, and my gift the other night; everyone is very kind to me; there is no reason why I should not be successful."

"Sometime I shall take you and shield you from every sorrow and care, as far as it lies in human power to do so," was his unspoken thought. Madie was happy to renew her old time intimacy with this friend, and the afternoon was long remembered by both.

"How nice it is to get out in the country and see the *real* of it all," Sada said, when they had reached the shade of the woods. "I have been glad ever since I came."

"I am very glad, too. I was afraid it would be years before I could see you, and it seemed such a long time since we parted. Have you forgotten what I said then?"

Sada's answer was very indistinct, but Ned gathered from it that she was not forgetful.

"I am poor, dear, and it may take years to make a home for you. I do not want you to step from affluence to poverty. You have been accustomed to gay society and to being surrounded by wealth. Maybe it is wrong to ask you to be my wife when you might do so much better. I do not want you to come to me and regret it afterward, but with 'something to work for, someone to love,' I will be more of a man, Sada. We are both alone in the world, dear."

"Not if we are together," she said, looking at him bravely; and for these two, there was a "new heaven and a

new earth." "I do not care for poverty at all. My mother used to be happy before father enlisted, and they had nothing."

"You have met so many brilliant men in society, I wonder that you have kept faith with me."

Sada told him of Mr. Yonge, but withheld the name. "You might meet him sometime, and perhaps both would feel uncomfortable. I have no patience with a woman who holds up her offers for the world's inspection; if she cannot say yes, she can keep his secret, and retain his respect. Now, Ned, have you no confession to make?"

"I first fell in love with an ideal. I think that is of frequent occurrence; the great objection is, that one is apt to vest the first one he meets with the quality his ideal possesses, when in reality she is nothing of the sort, and the mistake is discovered too late. I was sick in the hospital, and was cared for by a sweet, sad-eyed woman; before I left she was taken ill. I was with her when she died. She showed me a picture of one of her daughters, the peaceful, young face rested me. That mother's one thought was for her children. I said to her, 'I never knew your daughter very well, but if she is all her face reveals to me, she shall be all in all to me, if I suit her as well. I promise you this, that I will at any rate, be as a brother to all your family for your sake.' I think that my promise, voluntarily given, helped to make her last hours peaceful. I have carried the miniature ever since. See, Sada." She was looking at her own face, taken years ago.

"Oh, Ned, it was mamma! Why did you not tell me before?"

"Because she gave me this letter to give to you, and I would not give it unless sure of your love. I could not offer it as a bribe." The words were penned in a trembling hand:

"SADA, DEAR CHILD:

Ned has been very good to me. If he should ask you, some day, a question that would involve the happiness of both, answer as you will, my blessing will be with you always, but he is, although young, a man any woman could

trust, and someone will love him. I hope it may be my daughter. May God help my darlings! is the last prayer of
YOUR LOVING MOTHER."

Sada was sobbing, and Ned was trying to comfort her. "I wonder if she knows!"

"I believe she does, for if we do not carry a knowledge and memory of this world into the next, the matter of reward and punishment would be unappreciated. I have expressed myself vaguely, and though I have not finished, I had better stop. I cannot explain my belief, but it is, nevertheless, a belief."

They went back to the others, and rowed up the river; the fishing party were waiting for them, and all started homeward when the birds were singing their sleepy songs.

The moon rose, as soon as the sun had passed from sight. "If I were to order the nicest thing in nature, I would have a full moon in attendance every night," said Phil, walking along, hat in hand.

A stranger seeing the party, not walking, but straggling, would have known that they were returning from some place; they did not walk with purpose enough to indicate that they had an object in view. People have a different expression and gait in going to a place, especially of amusement, than they have on returning.

"Did you have a nice time, Aggie?" enquired Madie.

"Splendid! We fished, and laughed and joked and told stories. Robert would get poetical once in a while, but the rest of us were not at all sober; we didn't intend to be."

The children came to meet them, and Mrs. Burton, with baby in her arms, called out a welcome. "It has been a perfect day," all agreed.

"I am glad to hear it," she said pleasantly.

"Did you catch anything, Phil?" Ned asked.

"Yes, did you?" and he gave his cousin a meaning look. Was it the last ray of sunset that illuminated his and Sada's faces? "The wind burns dreadfully to-day; we are not nearly as fair as we were this morning," Phil added.

Even grave Robert laughed at this last thrust. "What do you mean?" demanded Ned, both vexed and amused.

"Come, let us sing 'All together, once, once again,'" said Madie, noticing Sada's embarrassment.

"Now, Aggie, we ought to go; mother will be looking for us."

"We will all 'celebrate' together," said Mrs. Burton.

"Aunt Bell, we surely must take our departure before the Fourth," declared Ned.

"But the Fourth is Tuesday, and we cannot let you go until the last of next week, anyway. Sada has come so far and has only been here one day."

"That fetches me," said Phil, sentimentally. "I hope it will have a salutary effect on Edwin."

"We will try to make it interesting for all, fire-works and speeches, etc.;" and Aggie rose to go.

"That reminds me of one of my pupils in Greek, instead of inflecting the verbs and pronouns through, he would start them, and add etc."

"Did you mark him at all?" Robert asked.

"Oh, certainly," replied Ralph. "I thought such faith should be rewarded. He seemed to think there was such a perfect understanding between us, or he was so certain that if *he* didn't know, *I* did, that I managed to pass him."

"You must all come and spend the day with us," said Robert.

"Yes, we will, and you must come out here again. Good night."

' Good by.'

"This has been a very full day;" Phil suppressed a yawn as he spoke.

"You remind me of what Harry said, one evening last spring; he came running in after he had been playing hard all day. 'Sada, I'm so tired. I can feel it *run* from my head to my feet.'"

"I think we all appreciate the remark," said Madie.

"To-morrow you young people must rest; a quiet hol-

iday in the woods; one day in the city. What other plans?" enquired the hostess.

"I have one request to make: Please invite the people that we rode out with when we came, to spend a day with us. I enjoyed that woman's conversation so much that evening."

"Certainly, Ned," Mrs. Burton answered. He had recalled his boyhood to her, in his manner of putting the request, and the recollection was pleasant. "Mrs. Crowan will come, I am sure."

The days following were not monotonous. When were days ever that, with a party of happy young people? It did not take Mrs. Burton long to discover Ned's and Sada's secret. "I am very glad they are suited to and love each other; that is all that is necessary. Be careful, Phil, not to tease them."

"I will not say anything before Sada, but I *must* say a little to Ned. He is glad to tease me whenever he can get a chance. I can see now why he never cared for girls' society at school. Aunt Bell, would it be very bad to give him a gentle reminder occasionally, if I do it in a cheerful way?"

"Oh, Phil, you'll find the reality some time."

"I can't see why it is," he said, sobering suddenly; "love and matrimony are sacred subjects, and yet even sensible people make the most ridiculous, flippant, irreverent remarks concerning them. A wedding is a very solemn affair, at least mine would be; my sympathies would be drawn upon so largely for the bride."

"You are incorrigible!" said Mrs. Burton; and the subject was dropped.

The day at Mr. Peyton's was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Mrs. Peyton loved to entertain, and eagerly took advantage of this opportunity. While they were in the midst of an animated conversation, the door bell rang. Aggie ushered a lady into the front parlor. "Excuse me, I didn't expect to see such a number of people," she said in a low tone, as she caught a glimpse of the company in the next room. "I am returning your call early, but I

learned from my friend that Miss Burton was here, and I am so anxious to meet her that I came directly over."

"I am very glad you have come, and I am sure that Madie will be pleased to see you. She has spoken of you so many times since we met you that day in the woods."

She called Madie from the back parlor and introduced her to Miss Cragie. "I have been eager to see you ever since commencement. I remembered meeting you the week before, and your saying that you liked me;" adding with a bright smile, "I was either egotistical enough or had sufficient confidence in you to believe it. I have been visiting Mrs. Roby, an old friend of my mother's, and resting from my work. I think the task of re-creation will take all summer." She analyzed the word in her pronunciation of it. Madie was as charmed as a young girl generally is with the notice of one older than herself.

"Miss Peyton called on me yesterday, and I am in haste to continue the acquaintance. She mentioned your excursion, and it made me desirous of seeing the delightful places she described. I thought, perhaps, your sister would allow me to give her a few lessons in sketching. It would be a positive deed of charity, for I have been accustomed to a busy life and cannot endure real hard resting."

Miss Cragie was a thorough business woman, and exhibited it in her conversation. She was possessed of native politeness within and without, not veneered with it as many fashionable people are. She had not passed beyond her first quarter century; yet she had lived more than many much older. Because she was one of the world's workers herself, she was ever willing to reach forth a helping hand to those of her own sex who needed aid. The openly expressed admiration of Madie had touched a responsive chord in her own nature.

She was often looked upon coldly by women, and called "so queer," as if honest independence were a quality a girl should scorn to possess. Respected by men who greeted her as a co-worker; never petting and seldom praising her, because she did not seem to need either;

yet, with all a woman's love of appreciation, this girl stood alone in the world, doing a *man's* work for a *woman's* wages, and *had* to be satisfied. But I will not keep the reader longer from Madie's reply to the kind offer.

"I know your generous words will make my sister very happy."

"Do not try to thank me; I shall be glad to practice a little for my own benefit. I wanted to tell both you girls that I enjoyed your essays, they were original and that is a good deal to say for a production of to day."

"There have been so many good things said and done for me in the past week, that I do not know how to express myself. I wish I had a table to measure thankfulness by," said Madie.

Miss Cragie saw the tears in her eyes. "I think you will be able to measure it all," she said, as she arose.

"Let me bring my sister to you, please."

"Why, yes; I was not aware that she was with you."

Christa soon felt at ease with the stranger.

"Let me introduce you to all my friends," said Aggie impulsively.

"Are they all here?" she asked, smiling.

"My best friends are."

"Then I shall be delighted to see them, they must be worth knowing." Easy and self-possessed, without a particle of mannerism, she met all; and not one felt strange with this stranger.

When she had gone, Christa said: "It seems as if I had been acquainted with her a long time."

"Madie completely won her, by telling her she liked her, the first time they met," said Aggie.

"I didn't know that was the proper way to do," said Phil, "or I would have said the same."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DAY WE CELEBRATE.

The Fourth was ushered in with the usual noise and commotion. "I do not enjoy the day at all," said Mrs. Burton, as she and Mrs. Crowan were getting the lunch baskets ready. "Still, we must teach our children to be patriotic, and we ought to go and hear the speeches."

"Well, we must take the speech with the heat, and tire, and dust, and smell of fire-crackers thrown in. We got started a little late, but we will get there in time to hear the speeches, if we do miss the *declaration*; no one ever listens to that anyhow, and they ought to, I suppose. They'll have a girl with a flag around her, and she'll sing *The Star Spangled Banner*; good enough piece, and it always makes me want to hurrah when I hear it. For all that, I can't enjoy it quite as well as I would if I didn't know exactly what was coming right along through the whole programme. Now, there's the speaker, he'll begin way back with John Smith, and he'll mention every chapter in history, from the Captain's time down to to-day, and we'll all follow him, and cheer like mad, and feel as *proud*, just as we ought to, of course; and to-morrow I'll say 'I don't believe I'll go to another celebration very soon,' and I won't for a year, then I'll go through the whole performance again."

Phil and Ned telegraphed a look to their aunt, who understood. "We are going to have a quiet afternoon in the woods, couldn't you come, too?"

"Just as John says. But he'll say, 'just as I say;' if you was calculating on having a day all by yourselves, we'd better not come. We stopped because we knew you would have more than you could carry."

"We all desire your company, and are thankful for your thoughtful kindness," said Mrs. Burton.

Robert Peyton came to Ned when they reached the village, and said in a half whisper: "I'll go up with you. The president is waiting. I'll be back in just a minute, Sada."

"What does that mean?" asked Madie. But Ralph was busy with the children, and Phil was innocence itself.

"That was a little overdone," whispered Aggie, as she joined them.

The procession was ready to start, when Robert came and seated himself beside Sada. Too proud to show her astonishment, she could not but wonder at Ned's sudden desertion. Arriving at the grounds, Robert secured good seats for the entire party near the platform. The band played "*Hail Columbia*." "I'm just as glad as can be that I'm an American," said Mrs. Crowan.

"So am I," Phil agreed. "These national airs are enough to make anyone enthusiastic."

"Is Ned going to read the Declaration of Independence?" Madie enquired. For the first time in his life, Ralph ignored her question.

Ned was on the platform, but the paper signed by Jefferson and Adams, and all those other honored names, was "read by an esteemed townsman." The "Star Spangled Banner" was sung, not by one, but several young ladies. The president stepped forward. "I am pleased to introduce to you, ladies and gentlemen, a young man from an eastern college—or at least it seems *eastern* to us, although but a short time has elapsed since that state and her institutions was thought to be in the far west—a young man who has carried a musket, and belonged to the 'grandest army that ever marched to battle.' He was invited to speak very recently, but I do not think any apology necessary. I have the honor to present E. C. Philips, who will now deliver the oration."

"What a pity we 'can't all be corporals,'" Phil whispered.

"Dear me, but I've done it, going on as I did about 4th of Julies!" gasped Mrs. Crowan.

"Ned will not mind it at all," said Mrs. Burton reassur-

ingly. Sada mentally begged his pardon for wronging him in thought, and listened proudly to the speech. He did not recapitulate history, but spoke of his country's present, her future and her needs.

"Were you ashamed of me?" Ned asked, when he found Sada.

"No, indeed, I was very proud! But do not go way beyond me, Ned," she answered humbly.

"I cannot leave my heart behind, so you must walk with me."

"Help me to climb, too. Won't you?"

"Yes, when I have reached the heights, where you, in your perfect womanhood, stand."

"Fire-works don't commence until later," said Phil, at his elbow. Ned looked at him enquiringly, wondering how much of the conversation he had heard. "Not a word," he said, amused at the look which he readily interpreted. Sada had not heard the monologue.

Mrs. Crowan came up and in her straightforward manner said, "Mr. Philips I liked your oration, it was different from the most of them, yet not so different as to make us feel disappointed at the change."

"Thank you, Mrs. Crowan, I feel repaid for the effort already."

"Shall we go now?" It was Mr. Burton who asked the question. Turning to Ned, he said, "I am glad you spoke; it was very good," and Ned knew that this was a great deal for his reserved uncle to say.

"Now we will proceed to celebrate in our own way." Mrs. Burton gave Ned a look that was full of approbation, as she said this.

"No use in staying for wheelbarrow and sack races and other like comicalities. I can't see the patriotism in those performances. I can understand why guns are fired and flags are waved. A love of country that can be heard and seen, but when it comes to races and fire-crackers, a patriotism is brought in that can be *smelled* and *bet on*. I am at a loss to define the word."

"I wonder what John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin and

Roger Sherman would say if they could make their beloved country a visit on the afternoon of the 'glorious 4th.'"

"Why, Phil, I didn't know you were on for a speech," said Aggie.

"I think," said Mrs. Burton, when they were at luncheon, "that we are keeping the day as we ought, for we are making it *homelike*, and that is the very essence of patriotism."

"How the crowd at one celebration resembles another! Sometimes I think 'there is as much difference in folks as in anybody,' as the old lady observed; and again, I am struck by the general likeness of people." Ned looked appealingly at Mrs. Crowan while he was speaking. He and Phil had been aiding Aggie and Madie in their efforts to draw that lady into the conversation.

Her husband was puzzled at her silence. "What is the matter, Lizzy?" coming around to where she sat.

"Nothing, I'm trying to keep quiet before these college folks, and its getting to be awful hard work; it seems to me I never *did* think of so many things to say. I'm holding on to myself, but if they don't stop talking about subjects that I have an opinion on, I'll have to let go."

"There were some there that I should like to know," said Ralph.

"Yes," said Mrs. Crowan, for this free interchange of thought was more than she could resist, "there were nice faces there, and I don't believe but what their countenances was a fair advertisement of themselves. I sat and looked at a couple in front of me and their faces showed so little character that I was sure I wouldn't know them when I see them again, and I'll remember one face I saw there as long as I live."

"Describe it," they all entreated, but she only shook her head.

"I saw a bridal couple there," Aggie suggested, to continue the conversation.

"They have them at every Fourth of July I was ever to. It ain't polite, though, to make comments on people;

only in a general way." Mrs Crowan began to gather the dishes together.

The young people strolled away; Madie alone was separated from the others. She went along the river bank, thinking so earnestly that she was not aware of the distance she was leaving between her people and herself, for some time. When she turned, she was beyond the sound of their voices. "How rude they will think I am," she thought, as she hurried on. "I'll steal up behind them.'

There were her companions, and, farther on, the fathers and mothers were visiting together, the children were wading in the clear water; she remembered afterward how their voices sounded. Baby Josie was sleeping on a shawl spread on the grass, while Ralph was fanning her with his hat. As Madie stood there, ready to bound out from her hiding-place, a head was lifted from the grass, and two gleaming eyes shown out, close to Ralph, close to dear little Josie! How long was it that Madie watched that sinuous movement in the grass, so near to baby's white arm, and to Ralph's, just above it? His thoughts so far away and danger so near! The head was lifted higher. "Ralph, Josie!" the voice was hoarse with fear, but the spell was broken; she bounded forward; ere the call had roused the others, Ralph turned to see her standing on an immense rattlesnake, crushing the head with her tiny heel, while the body was writhing around her feet.

Quick to think and to act, Phil realized all, and, with long leaps came down on the reptile, just as Ralph took her in his arms. "Madie, darling, what if he had bitten you?" His face blanched as hers had done.

"They are all coming up," said Phil, in a warning tone.

"What is the matter?" Phil briefly explained to them. "If she ain't the bravest little creeter," said John Crowan.

Madie, weak and trembling, turned from Ralph's protecting arm, and reached toward her mother. "Mamma's

brave little girl," Mrs. Burton said brokenly, as she took her in her loving arms.

"Don't ask any questions. Leave her, she'll be better quiet," Phil advised, and they went away, leaving her with her parents.

"How did it happen?" Christa asked, when they were at a safe distance.

"I had started to find Madie, and caught sight of her coming back. She was stealing along to surprise the others, so I thought to surprise her. I saw her stop and stand so very still. I wondered why. I saw the snake just as she sprang toward it."

"Well, I'm glad the low-lived thing is dead!" ejaculated Mr. Crowan.

Madie lay with her eyes closed, and an occasional shudder passed over her. She opened her eyes after a time, and looked around, as if in search of someone. Ned, who had come back to her, understood and put Josie beside her. She smiled faintly at the little one, who was rubbing the sleep out of her eyes with her little fat fists. She did not seem to be quite satisfied yet. Ned beckoned to Ralph, who came quickly, followed by the rest; kneeling beside her, he took the little hand in his and pressed his lips to the white forehead. "My brave little friend!" Phil and Ned noticed that he did not call her sister again.

Mr. Peyton had thoughtfully removed the snake.

"Let us have one row on the river, it will benefit everyone," said Phil, anxious to change the tenor of their thoughts.

"Perhaps Madie will not care to go; if she does not, I will stay with her."

"No, Sada, I am able and willing to go, and it will not trouble me at all."

"True to her colors," muttered Mrs. Crowan.

"Nothing is ever any trouble to Madie," said Aggie.

"When I say that it is no trouble to me, I mean that it is less trouble than it would be to tell you I could not go, and so make the rest of you uncomfortable over that which might be bettered. I know *me* better than any other one

and that I am willing to do a great deal for the happiness of each one of you. If I kept you from going I should feel sorry for you and me, too. Making it unpleasant for all, instead of one. In this instance it will be nice for everyone." She had risen as she spoke and was tying on her hat.

"She is well enough to preach, so we will let her practice," said Ned, while Ralph led her carefully to the boat.

"How much he does think of her," said Sada.

"Yes, and has for years," Ned replied, "but she doesn't imagine it, perhaps never will."

"I think she will some day," was the confident rejoinder.

Ralph watched the pale face as they floated down the river, and thought of her bravery. "One thing more to admire, and be grateful to her for."

They talked, and laughed, and sang. Each one strove to make Madie forget the terror of the afternoon. Phil was considerate and led the gay conversation. Robert marveled at his versatility of talent.

"He is as contradictory in his character as most women are. I have wondered if he would make a good physician, but I never shall again; tact, talent, cheerfulness and tenderness. He will do," was his silent decision.

Arriving at the picnic grounds, they separated, taking with them, "all the tire thrown in" that Mrs. Crowan had promised them in the morning.

CHAPTER XIX.

FACTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

They met once more at the Crowan homestead. "Come all of you, and if there isn't room inside there will be out," were Mrs. Crowan's parting words, the evening of the Fourth. So they all went.

Phil had the photographs of his classmates and friends with him and exhibited them to his hostess.

"Are you good at delineating character?" he asked as he handed Marvin's shadow to her.

"Yes, when there is any to delineate," she replied, after she had given it a critical examination.

"Very good," said Phil.

"I never had my picture taken, but by the looks of some of these people here, it must be a painful operation; they have such a resigned, hopeless expression."

Some of the faces were young and pretty, and some were undeniably plain. Photography was a truthful *business* at that time, and not a flattering *art*, as it is to-day. With extra touches and retouches and shading everyone is handsome when exhibited in a photograph gallery, and one can form little idea of the original from the cabinet or panel that he holds in his hand. Then men took people as they really were. Now an artist finishes them off as he thinks they ought to be. A change from the real to the ideal.

Phil passed his mother's picture to her. "I like that; you would always feel comfortable with her."

"That is Aunt Bell's sister and my mother, and you have described her exactly. Here is a civil engineer."

"He looks as if he would be civil any place you was a mind to put him."

"He is my only brother."

"Too bad a quality don't always run through the family." Phil laughed at the quick retort.

"People always joke with him and me. I suppose because we are apt to return the *favor* and do not get offended," said Ned, who was enjoying the dialogue.

"There!" said Mrs. Crowan, "if I were ever in trouble and needed a friend, I would go to that man."

"That is Uncle Joe."

"Well, you ought to be very good! You have some fine looking relations."

"I think so. They are fine acting, too. I claim to be good by hereditary descent."

"I should hate dreadfully to have that girl visit me unless I knew she was coming, and could prepare for it beforehand. She'd spy out every bit of dirt, I know. I'll warrant she embroiders and does all kinds of fancy work."

"Carrie, isn't it?" Ralph asked, and Phil nodded.

"See here! I've said too much already. You don't seem to have much beside relations here; and I might not like the looks of all of them, so I had better stop."

"Oh, no, go on, I'm thoroughly satisfied," and Phil hurried to another.

"Is he a relative of yours?"

"He was only in the medical class for a little while. I didn't know him very well."

"I don't believe you ever would. He has a very uncomfortable look to me. Now here is one who has had so much sunshine in her life that it can be seen at a glance. She has the regular photograph smile, and there is no deep thought behind it."

"That is another fair estimate," said Phil encouragingly.

"What a sweet old face! 'Heaven just a little further on, follow me!' is what it seems to say. She looks like my mother," and the black eyes filled suddenly.

"I boarded with her last year. Mrs. Gay's face is a fair exponent of her character. Here are the college professors."

"I believe I could have guessed what they were. Earn-

est workers and specialists. There is a bit of the 'earth, earthy' here, and this is a man that was a boy once, and he never has forgotten it." Phil was pleased with this comment on his favorite professor.

"Theirs is rather a humdrum life; ushering one class after another in and out; listening to the same recitations year after year; explaining and answering questions; but most of those men would handle a subject or a book as if they loved it."

"Those were the successful teachers," said Mrs. Burton positively.

"Well, I had almost forgotten that you were my company."

"Just one more, please."

"Born under a mistake, and never righted it yet. She'll know of all your failures and short comings, long before she will your good qualities. I believe she'll always be doubtful of your having any of *them*. Don't tell me she is a near relative!" and Mrs. Crowan laid Aunt Sarah's card on the table and hurried away.

"It is strange how much one can learn from observation," said Ralph; "how much she must have noticed and thought."

"We settlers have been drawn very near to each other. I have always been glad that these friends were located in our vicinity," Mrs. Burton said.

"She's as keen as the proverbial lawyer," laughed Ned.

"We have had a very nice visit," was the general remark on the homeward trip.

"And such a nice supper," said Mrs. Peyton, complacently.

"I hate last days!" said Madie, almost petulantly, "in school or anywhere. There never were hills without hollows between, and never a meeting that was not followed by a parting, and I am way down in the hollow."

Mrs. Burton had a long talk with each of her guests; congratulating and encouraging Ned and Sada, giving Ralph a good word to carry with him into the future, and

talking over Phil's plans with him. "It is a work that gives one a chance to do a great deal of good. I want you to carry your sunny disposition right along with you."

"I like my profession, yet it will worry me awfully to lose a patient. I enjoy fun, but I never could joke about 'stiffs,' as some of them did; those 'subjects' were dear to someone once, though I think the students often talked and made light of it to hide the horror and solemnity of the dissecting-room; it was a sort of relief to the overwrought nerves; some of them claimed to study the human body as they would any other machine, but I never could quite lose sight of the Motor Power that moved that 'machine.'"

"I think doctors should dread to lose a patient, the very fear will bring a care for the recovery that nothing else would," said Aunt Bell, as the others came into the room.

"We will try to come again, in four years," Ned promised for all.

"We've been children for a week! I mean to be a child every time I get a chance," Phil declared.

"We must not come too often," said Ralph sadly.

"I don't see why it isn't the properest thing in the world to go and see folks you like, just as often as you want to," said Benjie.

Ned looked at his cousin and smiled. "You boys have been out doors so much, that I have hardly visited with you at all."

"The idea that real good friends, sensible people at that, would be less friendly if they were to see each other often. I cannot and will not believe it." Christa was greatly in earnest, and her round face had banished all its dimples. "What do you think, Phil?"

"I haven't an opinion broad enough to cover the subject; these prairie winds hurt my eyes," he replied, drawing his hat down.

"Wait bravely, Sada! When can I come for you, dear?" asked Ned, in an aside.

"I shall be ready when you want me."

"It will not be a long separation, then."

So they parted again. They watched them as they drove away with Mr. Burton, until distance came between them. From the hill came one more fluttering farewell, and the three had gone to meet the days that were coming toward them. Sada and her little brother stayed a few weeks longer with their friends.

True to her promise, Miss Cragie came and gave Christa lessons in sketching, she proving an apt pupil. "I shall go back soon," she said one day as autumn drew near. "I shall be glad to go to work, but I shall always be glad, too, of my summer here."

She was a reporter on a city daily. Madie, remembering her Torch, had taken a number of private lessons of her energetic friend. "You will succeed, I know," Miss Cragie said, over and over again. "I shall see what I can do to help you."

Again the country was laid waste and the work of a year counted as nothing. Many of the settlers, thoroughly discouraged, returned to the East. "We couldn't leave if we wanted to, and I presume they'll run out, most everything does after a while," said Mrs. Crowan with a grim consolation that brought to Madie's mind the story of the woman who said, she had "always noticed if she lived through dog days that she managed to pull through the rest of the year."

The fifty dollars given her at commencement went to provide for family needs. "I wonder if my brother would have done any better in my place?" she thought, as she entered the school-room again.

CHAPTER XX.

CHANGES: IN TIME, PLACE, AND PEOPLE.

The two years that were waiting in the Future have traveled through the Present and are now resting in the Past. Madie has been in the school-room during this time and Christa has also been in the work, since her graduation.

Ned, Ralph and Ray are in a flourishing mountain city, while Phil is practicing his profession in his own home.

Madie folded the letters she had been reading. "I am nearing the fulfillment of my plan. I have thought of it so long that I am weary before it is begun, but I shall not acknowledge failure until I am sure there can be no success." She went to her best counselor: "Mamma, let me finish the ironing, while you read these letters; Christa, come and listen!"

The first was from Miss Cragie, stating that she had found a situation for her. "You can report in my place, and I shall take another position for which I am better fitted, because it is more to my liking. Mr. Morris has kindly offered to 'take you on trial.' Knowing you as I do, I consider that this will be a permanent situation, as I have not a shadow of doubt in regard to your fitness for the work." This was the portion of the letter which most interested Madie.

The other letter was then read:

"MY DEAR LITTLE NIECE: I learn, through our mutual friend, that you are coming to the city. Your aunt and I wish you to make your home with us. Hattie's home is not far distant, and I think that we, all together, can make it pleasant for you. I honor you, my dear, for your endeavor to aid your people. You will succeed, I am sure. Come as soon as possible, that you may give yourself time

to rest before your duties commence. I shall be proud to 'do the city' with you, and am expecting to grow young again in your society. With love and good wishes,

I am, your own

UNCLE JOE."

"They are both pleasant letters to receive. I am willing to let you decide for yourself. We will talk with papa to-night," said Mrs. Burton.

When the plan was presented to Mr. Burton, he objected. He invariably did object to any sudden proposal of change, especially when it was made by his daughters.

"I do not like the idea of my daughter's going out into the world. I have received help from Madie already and have not been able to pay her. I shall be ashamed to have her leave home and go to work."

"Papa, I have been proudly happy to help you. You could not help being poor, nor prevent the grasshopper raids. If you had gambled or drank it would be different. I do not believe you ever did anything that we would blush to acknowledge. Let me talk to you just this once, as if I were a grown person and your equal. It is hard to leave home, but I have a plan, and I hope to see it fulfilled. They will not give a woman any but a subordinate position in the schools here, and I want to change my work. I will not get a man's wages even then, but I shall do better than I can by staying at home and continuing in school work. Christa will teach next year; and, papa"—

"What is it, Madeline?" seeing that she hesitated.

"The farm work is so hard for you and mamma, both. Couldn't you rent the place and move to the village? I would like to see you nicely settled before I go. Christa could be at home then, and the boys would have a good chance for an education. You will have time to help them if you are not overworked. You are nearly as good for reference as a cyclopedia. And, papa, if I fail in my undertakings, please not to say 'I told you so!' If it is a failure, I can come back and take a primary or intermediate room somewhere. Teaching is always respectable work for a girl to do; most *cheap work* is. If I am suc-

cessful, I shall be able to do a great deal for my little brothers in a few years."

A doubt flashed through Mr. Burton's mind, as to whether a son would have done better than this slender girl.

They talked soberly, planning and thinking for all.

"Papa," said Madie tearfully, "I hate to leave you, for I am just beginning to feel acquainted."

Busy days followed. At last, one evening in the early fall, they found themselves settled comfortably in their village home.

"I've had so much to do that I haven't had time to feel badly over leaving home," said Madie, as she stepped down from the chair into which she had climbed to hang the last picture.

"There'd be a good many less glooming around if they went right to work instead of sitting down and nursing the blues," said Mrs. Crowan, to whom this remark was made. "Some folks act as if they liked to be wretched; they appear to think that mild melancholy is a poetical thing to have. It may be to them that has it, but it's a miserable thing to look at.

"I think your work shows to good advantage, Madie, and the house looks fit to live in from bottom to top. Now, if it was mine, I'd have it all unsettled before to-morrow night, the pictures would be a little crooked in spite of me! I don't know how you could express it any better than to say that I have things lying around *convenient*. I hate dirt, but I always have a room in confusion. Mrs. Burton, I can't see how you've done it; but here you have it, just as neat, and there ain't a room that looks stiff and unnatural; some folks' houses do look for all the world as if they were going to be taken. I hate to see a room with a photograph look a good deal worse than I do a person; such houses are about as homelike as a store, everything is shelved or tucked away. 'Home Sweet Home' would sound about as much out of place in such a house as 'My Country 'Tis of Thee,' would in Spain.

"Your house looks as if you were going to live in it and

everything was put here to be used, see the difference between *us!* You've been through all this muss, and you've kept your face clean, and your hair has been smooth, while I have combed my hair a dozen times a day and my face has been smut all the time. We're all made of dirt, but it does seem to me as if I showed the original design a good deal more than there is any need of."

"Mamma, girls! I've got a whole lot of mail!" cried Benjie. A large square envelope addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Burton was opened first:

Mr. and Mrs. Grenall request the pleasure of your
company, at the marriage of their niece,

SADA LEE

TO

EDWIN C. PHILIPS,

Thursday, September 20, 18——

At their residence, 1624 ——— Street.

Ceremony at 8 P. M.

This was the formal invitation; but from the western city, where Ned was making a home for himself and the one he loved so well, and from Sada herself, a long, pleasant letter came, filled with bright hopes for the future. "Ned and I both wish Madie to be bridesmaid; she is first, you know. It was the wish of each to have a quiet ceremony, but my uncle and aunt were determined on a grand wedding, and they have been so kind to me that I can not refuse them this slight pleasure, especially as I am going away from them. I am so happy myself that I am willing to do all I can to make my friends glad."

"I believe she is very happy and I am glad for both, as they will have a home of their own. It is a long time since either of them has had a real home," said Mrs. Burton. "Madie, you must start a little earlier than you intended, in order to be with them at that time."

"I wish all could go, mamma."

"We must let you represent the family, and content

ourselves by sending some token to them, and inviting them to stay with us a few days, when they go to their home."

"Oh, Madie, how lonely it will be without you. I shall have to send my thoughts so far when I think of you, that I know I shall *feel* the distance between us all the time," said Christa disconsolately.

They were standing at the window, looking at the sunset. Madie was to take the midnight train. "I shall come back with my Torch blazing brightly, I hope; then you and I will go into business together. If any of you should be sick, send for me right away. Do not wait until it is too late; it would be mockery to send for me then." Christa threw her arms around her sister, and sobbed aloud.

Robert and Aggie came in to say good by, and bring their offering for the happy couple. "I don't see what makes you go; I don't like the idea one bit," said Aggie, who was grieved at this parting.

"I'll write often and come back to you all, in a short time," said Madie, trying to speak bravely.

She bade her mother good by at home, as Mrs. Burton was not going to the train. "I'd rather say these last words here," she said. "I do not want to come back to the empty house and realize that she has gone from us. Be careful not to vex Aunt Sarah, and do not mind her whims and sharp speeches; she means all right."

"I will do my best, mamma darling."

Madie exercised the utmost self-control, choking back a sob at sight of tears in her father's eyes, as he found a seat for her in the car, and saw that she was comfortably settled for her journey. "Write!" was all he could say, and she simply nodded. When he had gone she drew her veil over her face, and let the hot tears come. But it is not to the one leaving home that one should give his entire sympathy; there is much to be given to those left behind; the one goes out to meet new faces and new scenes, and the novelty of all does much to lessen the lonely feeling; the

others are to see the vacant place and the familiar belongings, a constant reminder of the absent, with no break in the monotony.

Madie felt a touch upon her shoulder, and turned to see a sweet, old face, in a frame of silver hair, the soft, gray curls caught back on either side, and the sweet blue eyes full of kindly light. "I beg your pardon, my child, but would you like to take my pillow for a while? I have been resting all night. I am afraid of a sleeper, and I find I can rest about as well here." Madie was about to refuse the generous offer, but the little restless figure was bobbing about, making the seat ready for her, and she felt that it would be a greater kindness to accept the favor, so willingly offered. "I will only take it for a very little while," she thought.

"There, dear, let us change places." Madie nestled back in the soft cushions; she had been very busy during those last days, and was in need of rest. "I hope I have arranged it to your liking."

"You have, thank you. I know I shall be rested soon, but I am afraid it is very selfish for me to take your place."

The voice broke into a laugh that was quite girlish. "Oh, my dear, don't think that at all, I am very comfortable where I am; one needs to change position when traveling. I shall just nod here for a little while, and you will rest there," and the dear old lady smiled again, happy in the thought that she had been of service to someone.

Madie watched the bobbing curls for a few moments, then, the figure swaying to the motion of the train, went farther and farther away; the rattle and clank of the engine sounded fainter and fainter, and for a time the parting was forgotten.

A new conductor came aboard; he was about to hold up his lantern and awaken the sleeping girl, when a little, trembling hand was put forth. "Please not to waken her; she is very tired, and has a long distance yet to travel. I am sure she has a ticket, but I will pay you myself, sir, if you doubt it. I think she has just parted from her home folks, for she was feeling so badly when she first came. I

couldn't have the heart to bring her back to a realizing sense of it all. She is out of it now, and ought to stay out until she is rested so that she can bear it better."

The conductor smiled at her eagerness. "Well, ma'am, if you can take a stranger on trust like that, I suppose I ought to." The wavy, disarranged hair, the slight figure, and the grieved, weary expression of the face resting on the little hand, appealed to him. "She's all right," he said, so Madie slept on undisturbed.

The sun came up out of the prairie and sent his bright beams abroad; the day crept into the car; the passengers began to straighten themselves. Madie awoke.

"Did you have a nice rest?" enquired her new friend.

"Very nice, thank you: but I am sorry I slept so long, I didn't mean to. Can't you rest now?"

"No, I have been well provided for, and have rested quite as well as yourself. Thanks to the conductor."

When that gentleman passed through, he received Madie's ticket, and spoke pleasantly to each. "We shall stop for breakfast in a short time. I shall be glad to assist you if you wish."

"If you please. I have never traveled before, but everyone is very kind."

"I've not traveled very much either, but I haven't had a bit of trouble. I have been to visit my daughter away to the Pacific Coast."

"Anyone ought to have his head taken off that would even think of being rude to two such women as they are," muttered the conductor.

"I should like to know your name." Madie told her.

"I wonder if you are any kin to a Burton that I knew a few years ago? He boarded with me while he was in the medical college."

Madie held out both hands. "Phil is my own cousin, and you are Mrs. Gay! I've heard him speak of you so many times."

After that both felt quite well acquainted, and Madie was really sorry when they parted late in the afternoon. She watched her from the window and saw the bright

curls dancing around, as the owner met a tall gentleman, and began talking eagerly, lifting her head and turning it to one side like a happy canary. She reached the corner, turned and smiled an adieu to her traveling companion. Madie never saw her again, but she carried the remembrance of the sweet, old gentlewoman all her life. "Wherever she goes she will be trying to make someone happy," was her flattering comment.

The next morning the train steamed into the city, that had been the wonder of her childhood. Phil was waiting for her and hurried her away from the noisy cries. "Guess who was my traveling companion?"

"The Grand Duke Alexis."

"Oh, Phil, what nonsense; it was Mrs. Gay."

"Then you had a pleasant trip, I know. She was like a mother to us boys. Here we are at home." Aunt Prue, Uncle Ben and Carrie made her welcome.

"This is almost as nice as home!" she exclaimed.

"You must rest, my child, and then I want to hear all about your folks," said Aunt Prue.

"You must be prepared for a trip to the country tomorrow."

"Oh, Phil, to the old home?"

"Yes; I thought perhaps you would want to go, so Carrie and I have made arrangements to that effect."

"You are just the loveliest people I ever saw," said Madie.

"Most as nice as those at home?" enquired Phil, but she did not reply.

The visit to her former home was both sad and pleasant. They roamed over the entire farm, and from the knoll where they had played together so many times, they gathered a bouquet of wild flowers to deck Amy's grave.

"Let us drive back by the postoffice; of course we will have no mail, but it will seem as it used to when we lived here." Phil obligingly granted Madie's request.

Reinforced by her relatives she continued her journey. Phil contrived, in his bright way, to make the trip an en-

joyable one. The other passengers watched the gay group and smiled in sympathy.

Madie was going directly to her uncle's, but Mrs. Grenall insisted that she should stay with Sada, and the two friends were together satisfied.

This marriage was a great disappointment to Mr. and Mrs. Grenall. "Sada, with the advantages she has had, ought to make a brilliant match and she is going way out West to preside over the home of a poor attorney. It is too bad. As much as we have done for her," her uncle said.

Phil, who with Madie overheard the remark, quoted:

"To John I owed great obligations,
But John unhappily thought fit
To publish it to all the nation,
Sure, John and I are more than quit."

Just as if dear old Ned were not good enough for anyone. I wonder if they have 'done so much' for Sada, in order to have her marry well?"

Ned came the next day, and won Sada's relatives completely in the first hour's conversation. He talked politics and the rise and fall of stocks with Mr. Grenall, and was greatly interested in Mrs. Grenall's prescriptions.

The preparations were completed, and the sweet-faced bride was waiting with her bridesmaids—Madie, Carrie and Miss Cragie—for the summons.

"Who are the groomsmen? Sada doesn't seem to know, or else she evades us," said Carrie.

"Phil is one," said Sada with a queer smile.

When they stepped out into the broad hall, they were joined by Ray and Ralph.

"Didn't you know I was to be 'best man?'" Ralph asked, amused at Madie's surprised look.

"No, but I am very glad that it is you, and not a stranger."

In the spacious drawing-room, where the guests were assembled, the solemn words were spoken. "My wife," Ned whispered, as he drew her to his side.

With a world of trust in her solemn gray eyes, Sada

said, "My husband," so low that he alone heard her words.

Congratulations and good wishes were lavished upon them. The sumptuous dinner was served, and the bridal pair were ready to depart.

"Harry, little brother, you must come to me very soon," said his sister-mother.

"Oh, Sada, how we shall miss you," sobbed Mrs. Grenall.

Madie had sent a loving message to each of her dear ones at home, and Phil, seeing how grieved she was at the parting, said encouragingly: "I'll stay a few days longer, and I'm sure Carrie will, too; so don't look so sober, Madie."

Ralph looked in vain for a chance to speak with her alone. His duties were awaiting him, and he could not stay longer than that evening. "It hardly seems as if I had seen you at all."

Madie wondered why she dreaded the parting with him more than with her cousin and his wife. "I had so much to say to you, Ralph."

"Write it," he said gently. "I had much to say to you; I shall come back next summer. Will you be glad to see me?"

"Yes," she frankly answered.

When they had gone, Mrs. Grenall wandered sadly through the deserted rooms. Madie was going back to her uncle's, and went to say good by to her hostess. "Come and see me often. Could you spare a little time to go with me to visit my poor?"

"I will try to."

"Sada used to go quite often. The journey will tire her. I forgot to give her that headache medicine; I had it in my room and intended as much as could be to have her take it."

Madie tried to console her, but the little, homesick girl felt so heart-broken herself, that she could not find much cheer for anyone.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT THEY ALL THOUGHT.

"Such a beautiful wedding as it was!" said Mrs. Grundy. Miss Cragie devoted nearly a column to the toilets and gifts, and added: "There seemed to be so much more heart and happiness and trust in it than in many of our fashionable weddings, that one could not help but feel the good cheer."

"There!" she said, as she laid the pen aside, "Madie will have this to do hereafter, but she will not stay here long," remembering Mills' glances at the fair, young bridesmaid. "I wonder if I am not growing sentimental with my added years. These people have proved that love is not a salable article, after all. They have convinced even worldly me. What a grave, quiet man my partner was. I did not care to be bridesmaid, but I believe I have the happy faculty of combining business and pleasure."

Jean Cragie boarded at a fashionable boarding-house. The most of her fellow boarders were pleased when she entered the parlor. She usually spent a few minutes there each evening, after dinner and before going out. To-night, after sitting quietly for a time with her busy hands still, she took her tablets and went down to the others. "I must loan myself to my fellow sojourners; though I was beginning to appreciate myself and dislike the idea of giving *me* up."

"Out again to-night, Miss Cragie?"

"Yes."

"Oh, dear! we were going to have charades, and tableaux and a general good time." Miss Cragie was amused. She had reported so many such "general good times," that they had become monotonous.

The feminine curiosity was aroused concerning the

wedding, and Miss Cragie hastened to gratify it. "The bride looked beautifully, of course, and very happy. Her husband is evidently in love with her. I think they are both very happy."

"Why!" said one doubtfully, "I understood that he was not at all wealthy."

"You were correctly informed. But their tastes are alike, each knows the other's idea of living, and being, and doing, and I believe there will never be any sighing over 'it might have been.'"

"Really, Miss Cragie, I never knew you to wax sentimental before! I hope you'll send cards," said a young gentleman, who was holding a skein of zephyr for a lady to wind.

This lady made a little artificial noise that she considered a musical laugh, and said, "Miss Cragie is determined on being an old maid."

"I am certainly not determined on matrimony, and of the two I consider the first preferable."

"Good, Miss Cragie!" exclaimed an old gentleman, who had been holding his paper and listening to the conversation.

"Who were the bride's maids?" asked a stout lady, who delighted in every bit of gossip she could gather from those around her.

"For particulars, see morning papers," Miss Cragie answered from the hall door.

"Miss Cragie"—but she had already let herself out, and hailed a passing car.

Mr. Joseph Burton and his brother were enjoying a pleasant conversation, the evening after the wedding. Mrs. Carter sat near, listening to their talk, and adding occasionally a characteristically sharp remark. Mrs. Burton went back and forth through the cheerfully lighted rooms, 'passing herself around among her relatives,' as Phil said. She was a devotee at fashion's shrine, yet she still had something of tender, kindly feeling in her heart, after all these years spent for society. Ray and

Carrie were together, trying to forget the time that had elapsed since they parted. This brother and sister were much alike, and were always in perfect understanding with one another. Phil, at the piano, would strike a few chords now and then.

"Play something, Phil," said Carrie.

"It would be very kind of me to comply with your request, and you could keep up a conversation all the time. I do not care to waste my talent on unappreciative listeners."

Madie had stolen off by herself. It was all so strange and new; she had seen Ned and Ralph such a short time, and Ned and Sada were going to stop at home. "They will all be sitting together now, maybe Christa is playing and mamma is rocking Josie to sleep."

Aunt Prue looked through the door at the lonely little maiden, hesitated a moment; then went in and drew her chair close to Madie. "Would you like me to sit with you for a little while, or shall I go away?"

"Stay, please."

"Will you talk to me? A trouble that can be talked about is lessened half;" so gently she spoke that her young niece opened her heart to her.

"I feel so cold around the head and heart, as if an iceberg were somewhere near and the wind were coming from that direction. Will this new, cold feeling wear off?"

"Yes, dear, when the place has grown familiar, and the strangers have become friends; a bright, balmy summer time will follow 'the winter of your discontent.'"

"You talk as mamma talks," said Madie, taking her aunt's hand and laying her own cheek lovingly against it. Phil called to them and they went down together. Hattie and Mr. Lawrence had called.

"Yes, it was a nice wedding," Carrie was saying in response to a remark of Mr. Lawrence, as her mother and cousin entered the room. "Sada is a sweet woman and Ned is a man to be proud of."

"The dresses were beautiful, and the display of presents

were elegant. I think ours showed off fully as well as any of them," said Hattie, and all were assured by these remarks that it had gone off satisfactorily to her.

"My husband and I came in this evening to consider with you a reception which we propose giving. I am anxious to introduce Carrie and Madie to our society. We think it best to have it while our cousins are all here." Aunt Sarah ably seconded her favorite niece's proposal.

Madie spoke bravely. "Hattie, I thank you very much, but I cannot afford to plunge into a round of gaiety. I have no party dresses, except the white I wore to-day, and I cannot get another."

Mr. Lawrence said, "I think we can purchase a suitable dress for our cousin."

"I could not accept. Mamma would not like for me to come here and be so dependent."

"Do you not see that we are in society, and you will have to go with us? It is a duty you owe to us and to the public," said Aunt Anna.

Madie's lips quivered in a way that brought a remembrance of her childhood to Aunt Prue and Carrie. "If I can appear in my muslin, or my one silk, I shall be glad to meet your friends when not at work. But I came here to carry out a plan and I want to do it, if it is only a girl's idea. I thought you understood it. If I am going to offend you or trouble you with this work, I must go somewhere else, for I cannot give it up."

Uncle Joe was standing by Madie when she finished speaking. "My niece is to stay right here and is to do just what her conscience tells her is right, and shall not be questioned. We will have the reception, but she will dress as she chooses; her taste will not make us ashamed, I imagine."

Mrs. Carter was not at all pleased with this turn of affairs, but she had to give up to her brother, whose strong good sense made him a power at home, in society, and among his business friends.

Hattie looked at her husband and made one more ven-

ture. "I do not see any necessity of your working at all, this winter," she said, in her slow, indolent way. "I have never had much to do with the laboring classes."

"There, there! you have had to do with some of the hardest worked and poorest paid women in the country—your washerwoman, and cook, and seamstress. If Madie came here to work, she is going to do it. I do not want her to be deterred from doing her duty by any silly notions or false pride. Now there is one thing in which I don't at all agree with you women; if I were to give a reception, I would invite all those who have helped me in business, or in my standing in society. A woman is about as greatly indebted to her dressmaker and milliner for her social standing as to anyone, but she never thinks of inviting *them* when she opens her house to 'her dear five hundred.'"

"Joseph has mounted his hobby and he will ride it away from everything."

"Sarah has begun and I will stop," said Mr. Burton resignedly.

Mrs. Burton had a great deal of faith in her husband's judgment, and again, she liked to see her sister-in-law vanquished. She never could get ahead of her in an argument, being both too slow of wit and too easily indolent, but she never failed to enjoy the cool victory of her husband.

Phil had been in his element and felt like applauding Madie and his uncle, alternately.

"I could not have taken the stand that Madie did, but I admire her for her courage," Carrie confessed to her brothers.

The preparations went on rapidly; Ray was anxious to get back to his work. "I must stop at home for a few days, you know," he said in explanation of his haste.

Together, the cousins viewed the city, visited the parks, the opera, and went sailing on the blue waters of the lake.

The party was on Madie's twentieth birthday. "What shall I wear, Carrie?"

"Your white," she promptly answered. "You will

have plenty of time to wear your silk before the winter is over, and a muslin is always pretty and appropriate."

"I don't believe Madie has thought that we put it on her birthnight purposely. I shouldn't have known, but Ray and Carrie spoke of it. Even if she knew the people here, I don't believe she'd like to have it given out as an anniversary. I think myself it looks a little like begging," said Aunt Prue.

Madie received a package from home. A gift from each, including Ned and Sada. Ralph had not forgotten her, as the volume of poems proved. "If I only could be there just one little minute!"

"I know it must be hard for you," said Ray, in his sober, kindly voice.

A box was sent over from Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence. Some rare flowers and a pearl and satin fan were inside. "Lovely! and it just matches your dress," said Carrie. "Here is something I want you to wear for my sake." The delicate point-lace tie was laid beside the fan.

Madie began to thank her, when Ray and Phil brought in an escritoir. "For our literary cousin," they said, trying to banish her sadness. Aunt Prue and Uncle Ben came with a box of gloves and a copy of Shakespeare.

"You will need a time-piece when you go out reporting, so my wife and I have decided," said Uncle Joe, as he hung the chain, to which a beautiful watch was attached, around her neck. Aunt Sarah was "determined that she should not make Hattie ashamed." The dress of ruby velvet and satin was a marvel of skill.

"You have beaten me, after all. Everything is beautiful, and I am thankful to all of you. I—— don't you see, I can't say any more or I shall cry?" She turned from them all and ran to her room. It had all been such a surprise to her; and, besides, her pride was hurt a little by Aunt Sarah's gift. Then she thought of the loving wishes she had received that day, and remembered for what she was working. "I will not be obliged to spend very much for myself, and will be that much nearer the fulfillment of my wishes. *I will be pleased.*"

Aunt Sarah decided with the other ladies of the family that the white dress would be more appropriate for Madie that night. They were a little curious to see how their western relative would appear at a grand reception. Miss Cragie and Phil were not doubtful in the least, and Carrie said, after the first guests were greeted, as they stood beside Mrs. Lawrence, "she will do."

The slender figure floated through the dance as gracefully as any of the city belles. "She doesn't make any more work over dancing than she would if she were a leaf in a strong wind," said Uncle Joe.

"What a bright, thoughtful face your cousin has," a gentleman observed to Mrs. Lawrence, as they were promenading through the crowded rooms. She smiled as if the compliment reflected credit upon herself. She was in her element to-night.

"If I only could keep her from going to work. It will seem as if I tried to impose upon my friends, to introduce her with such *eclat*, and then to let her go to work and support herself." This thought was the one drawback to her evening's enjoyment.

"Come and see me to-morrow. I shall be at liberty all the afternoon and shall be glad to see you and your cousin."

"I will, Jean, for I feel as if I needed you," said Madie. The two were standing together for a moment.

Phil noticed that his brother looked earnestly at the tall, self-possessed young lady who moved gracefully through the crowd. "One of the world's workers," he said to himself. Seeing her and Madie together, he made his way to them and found a golden opportunity to converse with the "author of those racy articles."

Phil claimed his cousin for the next dance and left the two together. "It is my business to study symptoms, and for my elder brother, I would prescribe an entire change of scene."

"Please, not to say a word, Phil."

"I most assuredly will not. It is a good deal like fever, easily broken at the outset. I don't say, as many of your

own sex would, that 'I can't see that there is anything in *her* for him to admire.' I rather like her myself, and did the first time I ever saw her." He spoke the words so lightly that Madie thought he was in jest, but Carrie, who chanced to hear the last remark, wondered if her fun-loving brother were not in earnest.

"I would rather it would be he than Ray, for he needs such a woman as she is," but she was too wise to interfere.

"Could I come with my cousin to see you to-morrow?" Ray asked, striving hard to hide the eagerness in his voice.

"Certainly. I shall be pleased to see any of Miss Burton's relatives," and then was provoked at herself, because of the triteness of the remark.

When Miss Cragie bade Madie good night, she invited her to bring her three cousins with her the next day. Mrs. Lawrence heard the invitation and shrugged her shoulders. She had copied this expression of contempt from stories she had read of the gay French people. "If Miss Cragie is accustomed to good society she is not an equal," the look and shrug said plainly. Madie noticed the face and shoulders and was troubled.

Miss Cragie gave a real American twitch to her scapulae and steeled her heart against this new friendship that was creeping in. "I am only borrowed for the occasion, you see," she explained to Madie, who had left the gay scene to accompany her friend to the cloak-room.

"People like to read of the grand entertainments they give in the next morning's paper, so I am sent around like any other parcel. I go to many places, and meet many people who do not see me afterward. It seems strange, with my proportions, that I am not visible to the naked eye on the street, but it is a fact."

"I don't see how they can be so rude. I could not borrow or ask favors of one whom I would not associate with."

"They deem it a favor to allow me admission to their homes at any time. I am a working woman, you know."

"Mamma says, 'every girl should be able to be self-supporting.'"

“Your mother is a sensible woman, but she does not understand the extreme delicacy of polite society, in regard to the ‘labor question.’”

After she had bidden her friend good night, Madie went thoughtfully back to the crowded rooms. “I wonder if they will ignore me after I have gone to work? I shall be Uncle Joe’s niece and Hattie’s cousin just as I am now. Well, I will know who my real friends are, at any rate. When the sifting process is through, I don’t believe my sieve will be quite empty.”

“It has been a grand success, and the season has opened delightfully,” the guests said to Mrs. Lawrence.

The family stood together for a few minutes in the deserted parlor. Carrie, in her quiet, self-contained way, had expressed herself as pleased with all.

“And how did you enjoy yourself,” Uncle Joe asked abruptly.

“Oh, very, very much indeed, and I thank you all over and over again. I wish *they* all could have been here.” ‘They,’ at this time comprised Madie’s world. “I am afraid so much pleasuring is spoiling me.”

“You appeared a great deal better than I expected you would, but you are too impulsive; you should move through a room more slowly than you do,” said Aunt Sarah, with the charming frankness only known to near and dear relatives.

“I received ever so many complimentary remarks for both my cousins,” said Mrs. Lawrence graciously.

“Is there no one to be found in this great city to say a kind word for Ray and I?” enquired Phil.

“I know of several good things that were said, but I will not repeat them,” said his Aunt Anna.

“Our cousins all did us credit,” Mrs. Lawrence decided.

So Madie, as she herself expressed it in a letter to her mother that night: “Had passed examination and received a certificate to go into society for the season, but I shall not use my passport very often. My presents were all lovely, and every time I look at them I shall see the

dear ones who gave them. I would exchange all this splendor for one of your sweet story hours."

"Madie!"

"What is it, Carrie?"

"It is nearly morning, and you must rest."

"I'm coming." And the noise and roar of the city lulled her to sleep.

CHAPTER XXII.

PLAYING KEEP HOUSE.

"If a lady calls for me to-day, please show her to my room, I shall be in all the afternoon." Miss Cragie gave this brief order to the bell-boy when she entered the parlor after luncheon. It was an unusual thing for this independent young woman to receive a real visitor, and, although her fellow-boarders were generally well-bred, they exhibited their surprise in quick glances at one another, while several pairs of curious eyes followed the retreating figure as she wended her way to her own apartments.

"She must be expecting someone," said a large indolent woman, who roomed opposite Miss Cragie, and was at the present moment rejoicing in that fact.

"I sincerely hope she is," said her old gentleman friend, lowering his paper for a moment. "Hers is such a busy life, that she will enjoy a friendly, restful visit, and I do not think her visitor will count the time spent with her as wasted."

"Surely not," said Mrs. Howe, who never disputed, especially with gentlemen.

But when four young people presented themselves, and inquired for Miss Cragie, the excitement in that parlor was intense. Mrs. Howe found it necessary to go to her room immediately.

"She is becoming quite gay!"

"Rather a fine looking lot."

"The taller gentleman resembles a minister;" were the various comments made upon the new arrivals. If Miss Cragie had entered the room at that moment, the entire company would have gathered around her, interested in her bright conversation, and portly Mrs. Howe would

have been among the foremost. Deceitfulness was her chief characteristic. When she was practicing her deceptive and secretive powers she seemed the most real and frank.

Miss Cragie was frequently annoyed by her covert sneers and innuendoes. In speaking of her to the elderly man, who, of all the boarders, was the most kind to this orphan girl, Jean once said: "I hate to see so much waste material. There is Mrs. Howe, who is an absolute failure as a woman, but as a wasp she would meet with unlimited success." Mr. Warren was too deeply interested to even smile at the sharp comment.

"I have sometimes thought that deceitfulness ought to be treated as a crime," he said.

"I heartily agree with you; why not put it slander in the third degree?"

"I think that that would be quite correct. I hope you will not mind these speeches. Women ought to have more to think about, then they would not be so narrow, Miss Jean."

But we have left Miss Cragie to meet her visitors alone, when we should have been with her. "How pretty your rooms are," said Carrie, walking to the window. She had not learned that it was considered the height of impropriety to look from or sit by a window in that great city.

"I chose upper rooms because I thought it would be nice to *feel above* people sometimes. The atmosphere seems better, too. I wanted front rooms, because I am not at all curious about 'my neighbor over the *alley* way' and I fail to see anything interesting in people's back yards."

"I don't know as to that," said Phil, laughing. "One would have a better chance to study human nature. The *seem* is always at the front door, but the *reality* often takes the rear entrance and exit."

"Your rooms please me, because they are so homelike," said Madie.

Miss Cragie was delighted with the appreciation. "I

did not know but these varied adornments might not be harmonious to a stranger's eye. I see the dear hands that fashioned them, and if the donors were here, there would be no incongruity. Soldiers are the only *people* that I care to see on dress parade, and it is absurd to fix a *room* for that purpose."

At this time the decorative craze had not swept through every household, and there were neither fire shovels, nor potato mashers, nor spades, nor rolling-pins upon the wall. It was not reasonable to suppose that ladies knew that such things were. "If Mohammed would not come to the mountain, the mountain will have to go to Mohammed." So to-day these articles adorn parlor, and drawing-room, and boudoir.

Miss Cragie exhibited a portfolio of choice drawings, and etchings, and a rare cabinet of curiosities, brought from the Old World, when she, a young girl, visited those ancient countries with her father. Her library had been carefully selected.

"One can get such a good idea of an individual from looking over his or her collection of books," said Ray.

"I presume I have been a little extravagant, but I do enjoy books and pictures so much, and with the want, comes the feeling that I can afford it. Somehow I never feel poor until my money is all gone. It is very unfortunate to think one's self rich, only when one is shopping. I realize my poverty often, at home."

They talked of art and science and the "political outlook." On each subject there was a general interchange of ideas.

"What is your opinion on the Chinese question?" Phil asked. "I think we have discussed everything else."

"Let us postpone that problematic question until we have dined. I beg of you all to stay with me. Let me feel that I have some friends who are willing to give me more than a fashionable call." And in the spirit that it was given, the invitation was accepted.

Jean Cragie was very near to perfect happiness that afternoon. Her mother died when she was quite young;

from that time she was the petted idol of her father, who lavished every gift upon her that wealth could bestow, until her eighteenth birthday, when the wealth disappeared, and her loved parent died shortly after, leaving her to earn her own livelihood.

"I shall have our dinner sent to my room," she decided, as she went down to consult with the landlady. No matter what happened, or what was said, Miss Cragie never failed to find a friend in the kind-hearted lady of the house. When the plan was proposed to her this evening, she readily agreed to it.

"Why, I shall be real glad to send everything right up. It can be done just as well as not;" and she made the orphan feel as if this were the one thing, above all others, that she was anxious to do.

"Thank you, Mrs. Thomas! I shall always remember your many kindnesses."

She went back to her friends with a radiant face. "We are going to 'play keep house,' as I used to when I was small. Madie and I have been friends so long, and we will all be friends together." Carrie, who enjoyed anything domestic, proffered her aid, and merrily abetted by all; the dainty room was changed to a dining hall.

"Let me fill up the stove," said Phil, seizing the scuttle. "I have caught the spirit of helpfulness, and this is all I can find to do. I see you have not adopted either the modern grate or register."

"No, I cannot leave a grate so well as a stove, and I like to see what I am getting, even in the matter of fire. I never can feel comfortable to enter a house and sit down by a window to warm."

"Some people I meet and think they are very interesting, yet they are fearfully disappointing when a third person is brought in, but you are nice always," said Madie impulsively.

Miss Cragie fully appreciated the praise. "This is a beautiful break in the monotony of my boarding life," smiling at her guests from the head of the table.

"Some measure cake, conversation and calls by rule.

What I like about this is the general unexpectedness," said Phil with boyish enthusiasm. Ray, who sat at the foot of the table, thought only of the charming woman who presided so gracefully.

"You go to work the first of October do you?" Jean asked of Madie, who replied in the affirmative. "Let me see, to-day is the twenty-fifth, and

Thirty days hath September,
April, June and November.'

Your labor begins Tuesday. What a help that couplet has been to me! I wish I knew the name of the author, that I might thank him in thought, at least. I hope you will enjoy your work, Madie," and the older girl looked at the younger one with loving eyes.

"She will be a success, I know," said Carrie confidently.

"Don't, Carrie, you make me afraid. You all expect more of me than I can do." Madie looked really distressed.

"Let me tell you, Madie: Know what you want to say before you write it down; don't give an idea to the world poorly clad; be sure that it is so well dressed that you need not be ashamed to have it seen in any society." Madie smiled at Phil's characteristic advice.

"Your 'playing keep house' has been enjoyed by all, I am sure," said Carrie as they arose to go.

Miss Cragie accompanied them to the door. "This is good by to three of you, I presume," she said, almost sadly.

Carrie and Phil had taken leave of this new friend, and gone down the steps; Ray lingered for a moment.

"Will you let me write to you? I wish that I might continue this pleasant acquaintance."

Miss Cragie again found herself almost deprived of the power of speech. "Yes, if you wish."

"Thank you," and he was gone.

"I wonder if happiness makes people dumb! If anyone opposes me, or I am sad and restless, I can say and

write a great deal, but here I am, happy and foolish! I can't think of anything to say." She went to her room, and prepared for a crush wedding, where everything was conducted in the most approved style; the clock ticked off the seconds in an aristocratic manner; and the guests acted and talked as if they were a book of etiquette, and the hostess were turning the leaves.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A WORKER AND HIS WORK.

Madie bade her uncle, aunt and cousins good by. "My pleasuring is over, and now I begin my work," she said with a sigh which was a mixture of relief and dread.

Miss Cragie studied the manager intently, while he was conversing with Madie, and again when she carried in her first copy. "She has won there," was her gratified comment, and the young girl was, from that time, considered as "one of the force."

"You must go with me to our mission school to-morrow," said Miss Cragie as they were leaving the office Saturday evening. "I enjoy children more than grown people, and I think you will like it also. I attend service morning and evening, in order that text and sermon may be passed out to the world. So, what I might otherwise enjoy, has to be taken as a matter of business. I like to spend an hour or two with the children in the afternoon."

Madie readily agreed to accompany her friend the next day to one of the mission schools, where newsboys and poor children had been gathered from the streets of that crowded city.

"It doesn't seem to me that you give us very much of your time," said Mrs. Carter, as Madie came into the parlors the next afternoon, and announced her intention of visiting the mission school.

"Why, Aunt Sarah, I did not think you would care! I promised Miss Cragie, and I do not like to disappoint her; besides, I have not seen any children to talk with them since I left home."

"Oh, well, if you do not wish to spend even your Sabbaths with us, go right along."

"Go with me Aunt Sarah! Please do."

"No, indeed, I do not care to make a great deal of

those beggar children. They will turn around and steal from you the first time they get a chance."

"Aunt Sarah, don't think everyone is mean and bad. Don't you dare to think that. We misjudge and condemn people often, when, if we were in their places, we would do even worse than they do, I honestly believe. I am not going to doubt the world because I do not doubt myself."

"Well, we will not argue. I do not like to see a young girl so free with her opinions."

Madie's temper was fast getting beyond her control, and she hurriedly left the house. "Mamma will feel badly when told of this. I guess I will not write it to her, but will wait until I get home. I will write it down so that I will not forget it;" she slackened her pace. "Shall I do that? It will be very much like cherishing spite. I'll simply write to mamma that I was angry to-day, when I ought not to have been, and will try and do better hereafter; then I will not be speaking unkindly of Aunt Sarah, and in a little while it will all be forgotten."

When she called for Miss Cragie, the cloud of anger had rolled away, and she was bright and cheerful.

The chapel was filled when they entered. The superintendent recognized Miss Cragie and beckoned them to the front. The rich notes of the organ vibrated through the room, and the sweet childish voices sang the familiar hymn. Then a hushed silence, a few earnest words to God, and many voices repeated the Lord's Prayer. Another sweet old hymn, and the texts were called for. One little girl in the infant class, when asked if she had a verse, nodded her head so vigorously, that it almost threatened dislocation, and arose with alacrity. She turned toward her young teacher with a look of love, and said:

"The rose is red,
The violet's blue,
The pink is sweet,
And so are you."

She finished with another abrupt nod.

A few in the audience smiled, a few more giggled, but many of them were on the borderland between smiles and

tears. The young girl blushed at this direct address to herself. "That was very nice of you, dear," she whispered to the little child, as she sat down. This baby girl had been anxious to learn something, and this verse had struck her as peculiarly applicable to her sweet-faced teacher. She had spent a great deal of time upon it, being drilled by her brother, only a year and a half older than herself, who now sat in the adjoining class and tried to look as if he were not pleased with his sister's verse. I think He, who said: "Suffer little children to come unto me," accepted these words from the baby tongue as gratefully as if she had repeated a text whose meaning was beyond her comprehension. It was all done for love!

Two little negro children interested Madie greatly. "It is nice to see those happy black faces, and to feel, with a loyal glow at the heart, that we are a free people. I must write to Ralph and Ned to-night that I have seen some of the fruits of their years of labor."

Miss Cragie touched her gently. "I have spoken to you twice. You must have been a long way from here. Will you go into the Bible class to-day?"

"Yes, I will go there every day, as I am not competent to teach."

They were accustomed to comers and goers, and did not particularly notice the two girls who entered the large class, taught by the superintendent. Madie was intent upon the lesson and was trying to think it out for herself. The calm, measured tone of the teacher aroused her. "If Esther had not done this work and gone to the king, she alone would have been the sufferer. Some other one would have risen in her stead to do the work. God's work does not suffer."

Miss Cragie looked puzzled. "If there had been no Luther there would have been another reformer," she said half questioningly. "I cannot quite understand it."

The teacher looked at her pityingly. It all seemed so simple to him, and she was only a seeker after the truth.

"It seems to me God's work is not only delayed, but actually suffers for want of human hands to do His bidding," she said slowly.

"A great work, such as Esther had to do, or one that needed a man filled with divine inspiration as Luther, will in God's own time be done. In such a work a whole nation is either to be helped or hindered. God in his infinite wisdom and love will not allow it to fail. In the case of Luther, there was so much that was God-like in his character, we feel that it was not the man alone who did the work, but the Father must have walked very closely with him." The class listened attentively while the teacher was speaking.

"Little things are often mighty. I think God's work, or our work—it is so hard to draw the line between—does suffer because of our failure in doing as we ought. There are many little acts of kindness, which are in 'our kingdom,' that we fail in performing, and kind words that we fail to speak, and people whose name is legion suffer thereby." Madie had been drawn away from herself by the discussion, and these words were spoken eagerly. She raised her eyes to the superintendent.

"I think you are partially right," he said.

"Many things rest with us to be, and do, and say, and this lesson, as well as many others, must be thought for ourselves by ourselves," Mr. Warren said earnestly, and the lesson was ended.

When the school was again together, the leader spoke simply and kindly to all.

"Where have I seen him before? I know I have met him somewhere," thought Madie.

The children passed out in the bright autumn sunlight, and the object of her comments came and spoke to Miss Cragie.

"This is my friend, Miss Burton," said Jean.

"I am glad to meet both of you, and hope to see you here often," he said as he walked with them to the car.

"It is difficult to find those who are willing to take hold of the work as you do. Very few are willing to en-

ter as pupils. Most of them wish to teach or stay away altogether."

"Yes, I have noticed that the well dressed were among the teachers, and I believe those children feel that difference, and perhaps some are deterred from entering as scholars for that very reason, as they do not wish to confess their poverty and ignorance before us," said Miss Cragie.

"I am willing to be taught with them for a long time." The reverend gentleman again thanked them for their presence at his school. "Come again, if you will," and he smiled slightly.

"Where have I seen him and when?" Madie again interrogated her memory, but received no answer.

"How did you like it?"

"Very much; only I could never feel at ease with that man. He spoke kindly, too," Madie replied.

"He is a very excellent man. The good he has done among the poor of this city cannot be calculated. An untiring worker, faithful and honest; I would trust him always, and yet, as you say, I never can feel easy in his company. Children and grown people respect him alike; but the children never run to meet him, as they run to some of those who work with them. He never stands on the floor of the chapel when he talks to them; he invariably mounts the platform, and there is that difference between them always. Then he reaches down to help them up, and does not climb with them, shoulder to shoulder. I respect him more than any man I know. You need not expect him to greet you cordially the next time you meet. You will not get any further if you should know him for years. Stay to dinner with me, will you please?"

"No, thank you, I must go back to my uncle's," and Madie hurried on to make her peace with Aunt Sarah.

That lady was rather unapproachable for a time, but finally forgave her, and peace was declared. "I am glad of it," said Uncle Joe; "I hate to see a family in the midst of a civil war."

Madie entertained them with a description of the mis-

sion school, while Mrs. Carter appeared to be greatly interested in a book, lest she should seem entertained by the conversation.

"His eyes and forehead are so familiar; he resembles someone I have seen, and it has just tired me trying to think who he is," Madie said as she was leaving the room.

"Miss Burton, may I have the extreme pleasure of escorting you to church to-night?"

"Certainly," said Madie, sweeping him a low courtesy.

"I am glad Joseph has someone to play with; one child in a house is always lonely," said his sister.

"Then we are evenly divided—two children and two old people." Aunt Anna smiled at both as she spoke; she was pleased to note the boyishness of her husband.

"If you are willing, Madie, we will attend the Presbyterian church; I like the pastor, and enjoy his sermons so much that I often stay away from my own church to listen to him."

"I want you to do as you like, Uncle Joe; if you admire him I am sure that I will."

"You will be moved by his eloquence, and will feel his magnetic power. Now he is like a soft zephyr sweeping through the forest of thought, blowing the leaves of fancy hither and thither, refreshing all who listen to him. Again he sweeps through with a storm of eloquence; we brace ourselves against the tempest, and are anxious to be one of the earnest workers right away."

The church was crowded, but the pastor did not preach that night. It was an evening devoted to home missions. Madie gave an involuntary start when she saw in the pulpit the tall man with the keen eye and firm mouth, whose second she was vainly trying to recall. He glanced over the wealthy congregation, and, in his deep voice, repeated the words of the text—

"The poor ye have always with you."

It was a powerful sermon. Madie recalled her uncle's description of the regular pastor, and thought "this man

is the woodman, who goes through that 'forest of thought' with a ponderous ax, wielding powerful strokes and leaving a blazed track behind him. We are not lifted by his sentences, but he drives fact after fact home to us. His hearers are waiting for truth to follow truth, and seem to say 'it is coming,' and it does come. He is weighty, but not heavy; slow, but not tedious." She could scarcely repress a smile when she thought how she was analyzing him.

"I am coming to reporting easily."

When the congregation was dismissed and Madie was once more alone with her uncle, she enquired, "Were you disappointed?"

"No, Madie, not after the first; I was not quite prepared, but I got ready for him soon after he began. He preaches to sinners, and I am accustomed to being talked to as if I were rather good; Sarah is the only person who is perfectly frank with me in regard to my shortcomings."

"Mrs. Grenall was there and was greatly interested. I know she will open her purse and pour out its contents for that mission work; it doesn't matter what denomination it is to benefit. She will go into it as generously for either Jew or Gentile, and Grenall will see that it gets into the paper."

"Well, it is better to fill up our column with such items than with scum and scandal."

Madie fell to thinking of her plans for the future, and was silent for the remainder of the walk.

"Talk when you please, and be quiet when you have a mind to," was Uncle Joe's theory concerning communion-ship of friends.

One evening during the following week, Madie had been delayed much later than usual, and the lamps had long been lighted ere she started homeward. She had expected to get through before dark and had left no word at her uncle's for anyone to come for her. She went to the corner and hastily entered a car

"You have made a mistake," said the conductor as he

passed through. He stopped the car and directed her to the right one. "Go north one block and east two, and you will find your car."

She had never been bewildered before. "I cannot tell the points of the compass at all." Not a policeman was in sight.

"Good evening, dear." The leering face was very close to her own.

She turned from him and went rapidly in an opposite direction. Turning a corner suddenly, she ran against a portly policeman, sauntering leisurely along.

"Oh, sir; a drunken man spoke to me."

"Vareabouts did he do dot?"

"Just around the corner. There he is now."

The officer went toward the advancing figure. "Vot do you means by such conduct anyhow?"

"I do not understand," the newcomer said haughtily.

"Please, sir, he is not the one I spoke to you about. Mr. McLean, I am so glad to see you." Madie told him rather incoherently of her adventure. The minister had already recognized her as the lady who had visited his school with Miss Cragie.

The policeman recognized him when Madie spoke his name, and was profuse in his apologies. "I will take charge of the lady. Do not apologize; the mistake was quite natural under the circumstances." The two walked away, leaving the policeman chuckling to himself.

"Vell, I nefer did see such a blame fools as I vas. I most came near arresting dot breacher. I vas shamed mit myself, but I don't guess but vat I vas dickled, too. Dot surbrize on his face vas awful." The jolly Teuton leaned against a lamp-post and laughed heartily.

When they reached the car, Madie turned reluctantly to bid her escort good night.

"I shall not leave you until you reach your home."

"Thank you, I shall be very glad for your company. I never was cowardly before, but I am really afraid to-night. My uncle will be glad to see you, I am sure."

This frank friendliness was something new to the man,

who spent his days among the poor of the city, always helpful and kindly, but never cordial or loving. Gratitude overcame diffidence, and Madie forgot that she had been afraid of him.

Mr. Burton met them at the door. "We have been worrying about you, and I was just starting in search of you. I am glad that you have reached home in safety."

"I have had an adventure, but fortunately met Mr. McLean, and he brought me home."

"We feel greatly indebted to you for the kindness. Come in and dine with us, Mr. McLean; we shall feel proud to entertain you." There was so much friendliness in Mr. Burton's voice and hand-clasp, that the minister felt the invitation was a fact and not a form, and followed Madie into the house.

Mrs. Carter was busily knitting when they entered, although she had been fretting over her niece's absence more than either of the others. "Well, you've come at last, after having worried us all. This is what comes of being independent."

Madie explained the cause of her delay. Mrs. Carter was not at all appeased.

"Oh, Sarah, never mind! I am so pleased to see her with us again that I could not scold if I wanted to. Her explanation is satisfactory. I have known people to lose their children, and to be nearly distracted at not finding them, but when they were found, they would punish them severely; that such a proceeding made the children thankful for a renewal of acquaintance, I have no doubt."

Mr. McLean smiled at Mr. Burton's words, and coming forward was presented to Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Burton. Now, of all people whom Mrs. Carter desired to stand well before, clergymen were foremost. She of course preferred those of her own church, but she *liberally tolerated* all. She began to speak of church work immediately, giving him to understand that she was a Christian. While he thought of a call he had made in a tenement house a few days before. The woman was washing, and did not stop her work as she spoke to him.

"I hain't time to talk much now, and I don't want none of your tracts. I'd like to send the children to school first-rate, if they had got anything fit to wear. You might take your papers down to the woman on the first floor. She is a Christian, or leastwise she told me she was one 'tother day. I've been acquainted with her for a good while, but I didn't know it afore."

The dinner was a pleasant meal. Mr. McLean talked as he seldom talked with strangers.

"I believe he has read and seen more than any person I have ever heard talk, and he doesn't seem to be conscious of it," Madie thought, as she listened eagerly to the conversation.

"Do not go yet, please," urged Mrs. Burton, when they returned to the parlor.

"I would gladly stay longer, but I have work that will keep me busy until midnight."

"And I have hindered you," said Madie, really troubled.

"A vacation is pleasant, occasionally. Do you sing? I should like to hear you. I seldom hear any but the music in our chapel."

Madie sang a favorite ballad. "Perhaps you sing yourself," suggested Mrs. Burton.

"I am sure you do. You led the children last Sabbath," said Madie.

He seated himself at the piano and sang an aria from Elijah.

"Your voice must be of great service to you in your work," said Mr. Burton.

"It is," he answered simply. "I spent a year in Italy, and improved my time by studying music."

"Dear me, you are not a Roman Catholic, I hope!" Mrs. Carter exclaimed in a horrified tone.

"I have never professed that faith," he returned, and this time the smile rested on his face instead of floating over it.

"We are to have a dinner for our people, Thanksgiving Day. Will you come?" He addressed all, but looked longest at Madie.

"I will gladly; it will be my first holiday away from home, and I shall want to be busy," she said softly.

"I would go, only children, especially those who are not well bred, tire me. I thought I would do a little district visiting, but I couldn't talk to the mothers. As soon as they stopped work, the children began clamoring for 'a piece.' The boys were always hungry. I do hate to see a lot of vulgar people feed. It is bad enough to see our best society in a supper room. Wherever I went I heard, 'Ma, I want a piece.' And to see them all 'wanting pieces' next Thursday would make me sick for a week."

"We will try to send a part of the family, at any rate," Mrs. Burton laughingly promised and the missionary took his leave.

Douglas McLean was a thoroughly good man. Even when a child he had been spoken of as "such a good boy," and it had been almost a damage to him. If he had been blest with a little more of the human nature, he would have known better what his fellowmen needed. Being above most of the temptations that clog the upward path of many, he could not understand nor be pitiful of their downfall. Starting upward from his boyhood, he found a smooth pathway. He had to wash no dark sin from his garments, and could not realize that others would have to walk in the sunlight of God's presence, ere they could be "Washed whiter than snow."

Reared among the Scottish covenanters, he was a vigorous, healthful Christian, puritanically just, and preached the God of the Old Testament, full of vengeance and wrath. He was a "*God-fearing*" man, and there stopped. He had not come down through the years to preach the forgiveness of Christ, and to be a *God-loving* man, and this was what so many of his sinning fellows needed. Yet he was considered a successful worker. A thoroughly good man will accomplish much in his Master's service, but if he could have touched the hearts of his people, he would have accomplished more. It was not frightful for him to think of an avenging God, but to some black with sin, a God of love would have been a grander Being.

I'd rather be brought up in the love of anyone than the fear, although both are sometimes necessary, and then comes in the other Divine attribute—the Holy Ghost.

Many clergymen fail in their work because they have not their spiritual lens adjusted to the right focus to see the needs of their people. One can combine science and religion, reason and religion, and art and religion, but, until he has brought in love and religion he has not learned the first letters of the grand alphabet which spells "Our Father."

On Thanksgiving morning Mr. Burton, Miss Cragie, and Madie made their way through the long, crowded hall with their baskets of provision. Mr. McLean was here, there, and everywhere among his people. He saw the new arrivals and went to meet them. "I will find you some seats in a moment."

"We came to help, and do not care for seats," said Miss Cragie.

"Very well, I think I can find something for you to do; perhaps you will discover it before I do," he said, pleased with the proffered aid.

"We can arrange and decorate the tables. I know it will seem nicer to them than just the plain provision." As she spoke, Madie took some autumn leaves and dainty bouquets from her basket.

"I am very grateful, indeed;" and the busy man hurried away.

Mrs. Grenall was in her element and came up to the girls, who were arranging the flowers. "That is very nice. I shall send for a few bouquets for each table, and when we are through with them we can send them to the sick people in home and hospital."

When the long tables were ready, and the crowd of children were gathered around them, Mr. McLean said to Madie: "I wish you would sing for them when they have finished their dinner."

"I will with pleasure."

He raised his hand for them to bow their heads. "Say

the Lord's Prayer," whispered Madie. For the first time in his life he changed a preconceived plan, and several hundred voices repeated that which alone should make one "repent and believe."

"How happy they are; it makes me happy just to look at them. Mr. McLean, maybe it would have been better if I had not spoken, but I thought, with many of them there might be days when 'Give us this day our daily bread' would be a mockery, and I wanted them to feel that the prayer is answered to-day."

"You did right. They all returned thanks." His sentences were usually brief.

Two young bootblacks near them were discussing theology. "I go to Sunday-school every week," said one.

"So do I," said the other, as intelligibly as he could with his mouth filled with doughnuts. "I believe in praying, too. Yest'day I didn't know nothing about this here dinner. I heard 'em talking about Thanksgiving, though, and when I got home I was awful hungry. Didn't get any shines at all, you see, so I just dropped right down onto my knees, and I said: 'Oh, Lord, send me a piece of turkey, but if you can't send turkey send oranges,' and the first thing I see in the papers this morning, was a invite to this dinner."

"Sho!" said the first speaker, who had listened attentively to the recital.

"It is funny and pathetic, too," said Mr. Burton, interested in the "Confession of Faith" by this newsboy of nine years.

"I'm going to learn my sick sister a prayer, 'cause I'm afraid she's going to die, and she ought to say:

'If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.'

the boy went on, earnestly and sadly.

"Well, I s'pose that prayer was written for sick folks. I always want to say, 'I don't believe I will, though,' every time I say it myself," his companion said honestly.

"I have thought that, too," said Miss Cragie softly.

"It is a very trusting, comprehensive prayer for the little ones," said Madie in the same low tone.

When the dinner was eaten, Mr. McLean told them to "sit quietly and listen to some music."

Madie sang, not one, but many pieces; lullabies, school songs, and childish ditties, and one and all join in the last sweet hymn:

"There'll be something in Heaven for children to do."

Yet it was not an entirely fortunate selection, for one little girl, with a pale, pinched face, said: "If they are going to have dishes to wash and rags to pick, I don't want to go there."

"I want to find that little boy and give him something to take to his sick sister," said Madie, as she left the organ.

It was surprising to learn how many had an invalid relative at home.

"Have you anyone sick at your house?" Miss Cragie inquired of a tall, freckled-faced girl, who was looking at her with hungry eyes. It would take more than one Thanksgiving dinner to banish the lines that starvation had made there.

"No, ma'am, I hain't no sick folks, but there's them that would like a good bit to eat if they could get it. Ma hain't got her pay for her last sewing, and it seems selfish o' me to come and eat so hearty like, when they're a'most starved. The rest of 'em couldn't nohow spend the time to come yere to-day."

"That's just the way with lots of 'em," echoed a dozen voices.

"Let us give a parcel to every one," said Mrs. Grenall. So each child proudly carried home a fragment of the feast.

"Dear little things," said Uncle Joe. "Many of them are little more than babies."

Mr. McLean walked back with Madie, telling her more of his work than he had ever told another, save in his annual report. The young girl, with a heart full of loving sympathy, was an interested listener.

"I shall come sometime to take you with me to visit some of my poor, if I may?"

She unhesitatingly answered, "I will go."

"Are you afraid of him now?" Jean enquired when he had gone.

"Yes and no," was the enigmatical reply. "The afternoon is bright, but there is something about it that seems to say: 'This is the last, I am going.'"

"All autumn days say that, Madie," said her uncle, "and some of these mornings we will open our doors and winter will come in and take possession."

"I am always glad to see the days lengthen, and dread to have them grow short," said Jean.

Madie spent the night with her friend, and, for the first time, met the people who lived in the house that Miss Cragie called home.

Miss Lenox bowed and smiled, and took an inventory of her attire. Mrs. Howe, "wished for a better acquaintance," and Miss Cragie doubted her. Mr. Warren's "I'm real glad to meet you, my dear," sounded genuine. While the good natured hostess made her feel that this visit was exactly what she most desired

"Some people would have chilled me, and I would not have known what to have said or done. I admire tact and genuine good feeling, and am always eager to say a kind word for a step-mother and a landlady; they are generally so maligned." Madie said this to Miss Cragie when they were alone in the latter's room.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOLIDAYS AWAY FROM HOME.

"Aunt Anna, will you go with me this afternoon? I want to purchase some Christmas gifts to send home."

"Certainly, Madie. Will you go with us, Sarah?"

Mrs. Carter would not have gone if Madie had requested her to do so, but here was a good opportunity to feel aggrieved, and she took advantage of it.

"Never fear that I shall crowd myself along. I am accustomed to being overlooked, and ought not to mind it."

In vain Madie tried to explain. "I knew you did not believe in Christmas presents, and that your cold was troubling you."

"We will not discuss the matter; I do not care to listen to excuses."

She had taken some of the brightness out of the day for Madie, and Mrs. Burton knew it. "I shall enjoy the shopping. Have you decided on what you wish?" she asked when they were in the carriage.

"No, auntie, I want to get something pretty for each one; but the purse and prettiness must match. It will be dreadful for the clerks."

"We will find something suitable, I have no doubt," said her aunt encouragingly.

Book, china, jewelry and dry goods stores were visited in turn. Finally, in sheer desperation, she made her purchases. "I will buy these as a sort of 'mortification of the flesh,' because I have been so undecided about everything," she confessed to Mrs. Burton.

In the mammoth bookstore, which had greater attractions for her than any of the others, a gentleman watched her from a distant counter, himself unobserved. "She is

suited now," he thought, as he saw her handling a book tenderly, but by the expression of her face he knew the price was beyond her purse.

The clerk was trying to tell her that another volume was exactly what she wanted, and looked surprised when she did not agree with him. Then both turned and looked curiously at the rows of books again, as if they expected something nice and appropriate and cheap would appear. "I will take this," taking a volume of poems that she had once rejected. "I don't think I am quite satisfied; there are so many things I should like to get, and I have no faith in my own judgment. I am really sorry to have troubled you so long."

"This is my business," said the clerk with a smile. Madie was not one to sum it up in that way. Some people think if a person is paid for doing anything, he can be put through without a particle of sympathy, as long as he is kept in his line of business.

"I cannot say, by way of excuses, that I could not find anything else. I found too much else."

As they were leaving, the observant gentleman joined them. "Making Christmas purchases?"

"Yes, to send home. We always make a great deal of the day. How are your people getting along?"

"Nicely. We are to have a very large Christmas tree. You will come?"

"I have been a quite frequent visitor. I think you need not expect me to desert you at Christmas time. Have you noticed how eager and glad everyone looks to-day?"

"If they do, they only reflect your face," said Mr. McLean, which was the nearest approach to a compliment he had ever given.

"I feel nearer home to-day than at any time since I left them, and that must be the reason for my happiness."

They did not drive home immediately, but went across the river into the park. At Mrs. Burton's invitation, Mr. McLean accompanied them. The trees were loaded with frost work. "See!" said Madie joyously, "the year

is trying to appear young again." People, hurrying along, turned to look again at the bright happy face. It haunted many of them for the rest of the day, as if they had caught sight of a bright summer flower, blooming out in this wintry day, and yet Madie was not at all handsome.

Mrs. Grenall and Miss Cragie—hastening on an errand of mercy—met them. "I believe," said the elder lady, "that Mr. McLean is deeply interested in that little Miss Burton."

"I sincerely hope not. If he were ten years younger it might be a good thing for both. She might have some influence over him, but he is too strict in his ideas, and his puritanical notions are too deeply rooted; she would never be happy with him."

"I heartily agree with you," said Mrs. Grenall.

"I wonder why it is," thought Madie in her own room that evening, "that I am always pleased to see him, but I cannot be quite my natural self when with him, and feel relieved when we have separated? And yet, I like him very much."

She went down to pack her box; Uncle Joe offered his assistance. "Thank you, uncle, but I want to do this myself." More than one tear fell upon the parcels she was stowing away so tenderly and carefully.

Two days before Christmas a box came to Madie. "Open it," said Mrs. Carter.

"I can't, auntie. They were sent for Christmas gifts. We always look at our presents on Christmas morning, and it would not seem as if that were for what they were intended if I looked at them now."

"You inherit all your mother's sentimental, silly notions;" Mrs. Carter preserved a dignified silence concerning the box, after this conversation.

Madie's eyes flashed at the contemptuous mention of her mother, but she made no reply.

"I am going to assist in decorating the chapel if I can get through my work in time, and I will not get home until late," she explained to Mr. Burton.

"Then I shall send Thomas after you; I do not care to have you meet with another adventure."

"I do not believe in placing a carriage at the disposal of a girl who is anxious to be *independent*," said Mrs. Carter sarcastically.

"There, you and I differ," her brother returned, in a tone that proved that argument would have little weight with him.

They had finished decorating the usually bare walls, and were admiring their work. "All is done but the mottoes. What shall we arrange as the principal text after 'Peace on Earth?'"

"God is Love," was Madie's prompt reply to the minister's question.

"And 'Suffer Little Children' just opposite," suggested Jean Cragie.

So these texts were placed upon the wall. "How beautiful it is," said Mrs. Grenall.

When the evening came, it was like a glimpse of fairyland; flowers and evergreens, singing birds and bright-faced children; each one was dressed as neatly and prettily as circumstances would allow. Some had made a pitiful attempt to come out in the prevailing fashion.

Mr. McLean invariably preached to all his flock that "cleanliness was next to Godliness," and these children had wrestled with soap and water.

"Say what you please about material clothes," said Jean to Mr. Burton. "They do make a sort of veneer for moral. Not an overly dressed, but a neat and tastily attired child or grown person, is cleaner in thought, word, and deed."

"It is amusing to see them compare their attire," said Mrs. Burton.

"I am always interested in seeing children get acquainted; they look at each other in open-mouthed, wide-eyed wonder, and as soon as they get near enough to touch each other, they feel of each other's dress and are introduced without a third party's interference. See

those little girls with their heads turned to one side, studying each other; they edge a little closer together; now they are acquainted; they have settled back in their seats comfortably, the braver one is speaking and the other is smiling and looking at her with sidewise glances."

Mr. Burton was evidently enjoying the evening.

"I feel as if we were suddenly transplanted from this busy, work-a-day world, to a land where all people are as the lilies of the field, and 'toil not, neither do they spin ——'" Mrs. Grenall did not finish her sentence, for the children's voices rang out in glad Christmas carols.

"Will you sing to-night?" Mr. McLean asked, as he joined the group.

"No, I am grown-up, and we are not in a grown-up world to-night; this must be a children's entertainment; I am too large and too real," Madie answered. The reverend gentleman smiled at her words; she was no larger than many of the children who were there, but he accepted her excuse. "I pay it the highest compliment in my power when I say I wish everyone I know and love could be here to-night," she said earnestly.

Each little one, full of importance when his name was called, trudged to the front to receive his gift.

"The best of all is, not one has been forgotten." Mrs. Grenall's face glowed with good-will as she spoke.

"I cannot bestow a gift upon each one, but I have enough love in my heart to give them a good wish apiece, and a good word and smile to as many as will see or hear me," and Madie nodded and smiled to a little girl near her.

The child hid her face behind her brother; then peeked out to see if Madie were looking, and smiled back at her, and the next day told her playmates of the "pitty yady that 'miled at me."

Mr. McLean made his way to Madie's side as she was leaving the chapel. "I am coming for you to make those calls with me before very long; I shall see you to-morrow and then we can make arrangements." Miss Cragie hearing him, wondered, with a thrill of horror, if Mrs. Grenall were not right in her conjectures.

"Mr. McLean will call here to-morrow," was the information Madie had given to her aunts as she bade them good night.

"You invited him, did you not?" Mrs. Carter asked, and Mrs. Burton nodded.

"I believe he is a little interested in her, although I can hardly think that she is the kind of a girl for him to admire; I shall use my influence in his favor. He will take some of that independence out of her; she needs someone to rule her."

If anyone had suggested to Mrs. Carter that she was revengeful, or believed in human slavery, she would have vehemently answered in the negative. She believed that every poor person should labor unceasingly. Madie at home ought to drudge from morning till night, but Madie at her wealthy uncle's ought to be entirely governed by her wishes and Hattie's. With the exception of the few years of her married life, she had always lived with her brother Joseph; and Hattie, who had been the object of her care since her babyhood, was more to her than all the rest of the world.

Mr. Burton did not hear his sister's remarks, and, man-like, did not hear wedding bells every time a man and woman conversed together for fifteen consecutive minutes. If he had heard, his niece would have been saved from some dark days in the future.

Madie hastily drew on her morning dress and ran down stairs the next morning. She opened the kitchen door and called: "Merry Christmas," tossing a parcel containing a trifling remembrance for each of the workers there.

"Bless me sowl, if she ain't after trating me as if I was half whoit and free born," said the cook.

"Merry Christmas, Uncle Joe!"

He opened his arms and she ran into them.

"Dear uncle!" stroking his white hair, "I am so glad that if I am to be away from home, I can be with you."

Aunt Anna kissed her lovingly, but Aunt Sarah only said: "Good morning, Madeline!"

She had placed her offering to her uncle and aunts by the plate of each, when she passed through the dining-room.

"Shall we open the box now?"

"Yes, uncle, if you please."

"You had better be sure that the hour is just right. If you should make a mistake of a few minutes it would be dreadful," said Mrs. Carter.

"It is too late if anything, for we have not allowed for the difference in time." Uncle Joe had the cover off by this time. "Now, Madie, take out the things yourself."

"There is something for each of you, and for Hattie and Mr. Lawrence, and Harry Lee, and here is a note from Christa:

DEAR LITTLE SISTER:

I am in a hurry and can write but a few words. I hope you will enjoy the articles sent you, as well as we have in preparing them. Mamma and I wanted you to have something that we made ourselves; so we send you the little embroidered jacket and the silk mittens. We thought they would be *nearer* gifts.

I am keeping the Torch burning a little. We are none of us in the dark at least. I think we can manage until you get home, although we do miss you so very much.

Leon is well, and I am sure would send love if he could. Love and a Merry Christmas from all to all.

CHRISTA."

Madie's head sank lower and lower, as she read. When she had finished, she dropped down beside the empty box and sobbed aloud.

Uncle Joe bent over her tenderly, and Aunt Anna wept with her; but Mrs. Carter, with a contemptuous smile on her lips, walked slowly through the parlor into the dining-room. Tears were disgraceful in her judgment, while sensitiveness and kindly feeling, though not exactly crimes, were qualities to be ashamed of.

At the breakfast table Mr. and Mrs. Burton were pleased to find a volume for each from a favorite author,

and thanked Madie heartily. Mrs. Carter turned her book over and over, as if she were afraid of it.

"Don't you like it, Aunt Sarah?"

"Q-u-i-t-e w-e-l-l, still I never admired Holland greatly."

"Why, auntie, I thought I had heard you say that you liked him," Madie exclaimed sorrowfully.

"I do, passably well, but I can't grow enthusiastic over his works."

When Madie had gone from the room, Mr. Burton spoke warmly. "I do think that you might have been grateful for that child's gift."

"Well, we'll not argue. I think gifts should be carefully selected."

"She studied a long time as to what to get for you, and I agreed with her that the *Letters* would be interesting," said Aunt Anna.

"I think I have already said that we would not argue the question. I do not care at all for the book, but I can make the best of it and keep quiet, I suppose."

Madie was disappointed and went slowly up the broad stairs. In her room another gift awaited her. Dickens' works complete were there on a handsome shelf. "For our dear niece," was written on the card. She ran down stairs. "You dear, splendid people, I thank you over and over again," she cried.

"We are highly pleased with our dear, splendid niece's appreciation of us and our gifts," said Mr. Burton merrily.

The postman brought a memento from the cousins and Ralph in Colorado. When the sweet Christmas service was through, Miss Cragie and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence came, each with a Christmas gift.

"I am getting a great deal more than I deserve," said Madie.

Late in the afternoon Mr. McLean rang the bell, and was welcomed as an invited guest. Madie, a little surprised, greeted him quietly, but Miss Cragie, who was watching Mrs. Carter, saw through it all and thought, "I will beat you yet, my dear schemer."

Mr. McLean was evidently interested in Madie. She was a constant revelation to him. He had been very little in ladies' society, and had determined years before that he would never marry. Even at the present time no thought of matrimony had entered his mind.

"I do not believe I could find a woman to suit me if I desired a wife. I should not like one who would be antagonistic in her ideas; neither would I want one who had no opinion on topics of interest. I do not care for pets. Fashionable ladies are frivolous, and I could not abide a fault-finding woman. I think I can do better in my chosen field of labor if I am not encumbered with a wife and family." So he had reasoned for years, but the grand overthrower of reason had not yet aimed his darts at him.

The conversation turned upon authors and their works. Madie learned, to her dismay, that Mr. McLean denounced many of her favorite authors. "Novels are not good for anyone," he sententiously observed.

"For my part," said Miss Cragie, "I think that one needs something in the way of food besides corned-beef and potatoes three times a day the year round. A little dainty food for dessert will not harm anyone. So with literature, I do not believe in having it all solid. A little poetry and fiction—pleasant, healthy fiction, with an embodied idea of truth shining through the pages—is restful to the mind. I like to know something of the age in which I live, and I can get a pretty good idea of real people from the better grade of novels published to-day. It is a grand thing to be possessed of a fund of general information."

"Then you should read history," said Mr. McLean.

"Most people who read history begin way back with Cyrus and Alexander, and, unless they are blest with extreme longevity, never get through the middle ages."

"You are correct in your supposition. The masses of our people know less of the 'Great Rebellion' to-day than of the Revolution," said Mr. Burton.

At Mr. Lawrence's request Madie went to the piano, and the subject was dropped.

Mr. McLean was not at all pleased with Miss Cragie's remarks. "If I were interested in Miss Burton I should not allow her to associate with Miss Cragie as much as she does; she is too independent for a woman."

The object of his disapproval was inwardly amused, for she divined his thoughts.

Dinner over, in spite of Miss Cragie's maneuvers, he had a chance to speak with Madie.

"If you will be at liberty the day after to-morrow, I will call for you to accompany me on one of my rounds in this vicinity. If you choose, you can do this visiting yourself afterward."

Miss Cragie heard and smiled scornfully. "That poor child is overworked now, and with Mrs. Carter's fault-finding at home, she will be completely prostrated by spring." When she saw that Mr. McLean was about to leave, she arose. "I must go home early as I have some work that must be done," she said truthfully. "Mrs. Burton, I think you are fully aware that I have enjoyed the day."

"Come often and help us to make Madie's stay enjoyable," said Mrs. Burton kindly.

"Wait a moment, and I will accompany you."

"No, no, Mr. McLean, do not leave on my account; I can put myself in charge of a policeman at the corner," she answered in a tone of remonstrance, yet with the joyous consciousness that she was scoring one ahead of Mrs. Carter.

They went out from the handsome house together. The young lady chatted pleasantly upon subjects that she knew were interesting to the grave man beside her.

"Mr. McLean!"—abruptly changing the subject—"if you need visitors among your poor, I will go whenever my duties will permit, and Mrs. Grenall will devote a great deal of time to the work. Miss Burton would, I think, but she is a delicate girl, and I am afraid that she has more than she is able to do already."

"Has she? I spoke to her this afternoon and she seemed willing to take up the work."

"Oh, yes. She would promise to sit up all night and work all day, if she could benefit anyone by so doing. She never counts herself first."

"She seems very devoted."

"Madie Burton never *seems* anything; it is all reality with her."

"Perhaps I had better not call for her."

"Yes, if you have asked her; but do not give her an extensive round."

"I shall be careful. You are overworked, too."

"I can spare a little time now and then, Mr. McLean. I have a contempt for trickery. I heard you when you were talking with Madie and I offered to help for her sake."

"If you are willing to take another burden to save a friend, I think I can shield you both from the heavier duties attendant upon the work. I have found one woman who can be kind and considerate to another," he said, more cordially than he had ever spoken to her. He came near admiring this girl at that moment.

"There are many such," she briefly answered.

Madie hurried through her work on the twenty-seventh of December, and went to her uncle's. Her head was aching badly. She found Mr. McLean waiting for her, and, not waiting to rest, started out. In the first tenement house they entered, Madie was surprised at the cleanliness of the room and the politeness of the occupants.

"How very neat it is here."

"These are among the better class of my people."

In one room they found a little sick girl. "She ought to go out in the sunshine," said Madie.

"Yes, miss, I knows it! But the boys in the alley are that mean to her, and make fun of her for creeping along so slow like, that I can't bear to let her go no more. I thinks the world of Yanie, and I lets her sleep all the mornings, but she don't seem rested. She is an awful

nice little girl, and I don't likes to see her get so veak and weaker all the times." And the poor Norwegian mother wiped her eyes with her apron.

"Janie shall have a ride the first bright day. I will speak to my uncle about it."

"You have made one heart glad," said Mr. McLean as they hurried away, after the woman had shaken hands with each of them, expressing her thanks, as she had been accustomed to in the "Old Country."

"Two," said Madie, "for I am glad myself."

They went from one tenement to another. In some they had struggled to make the rooms presentable, and in others they were filthy and vile. "I want to see some of the lower types of humanity," said Madie; so he hurried her through these places.

"You must not come to these alone."

Little children ragged and helpless, drunkenness, dirt and poverty visible everywhere.

"I do not wonder that you are grave," she said with a great pity in her brown eyes for the misery and suffering she saw around her. "Do you carry tracts?"

"Not often; they would not read them if I did."

"I should like to bring clothing and food, and a plant or flower."

"Many of them have the regular beggar's whine. You will meet with more of this class at Christmas time than during any other month of the year. People expect it, and are more liberal at this season."

"Some are too proud to ask for aid even now, and they are the people I most want to help."

They walked along silently in the gray twilight. "She will be fitted for the work," he thought, and congratulated himself on having such a willing assistant. "I hope it is not too much to ask you to call on some of these people occasionally."

"No, I believe it will help me. I have thought, many times, that my lot was a hard one, but after the experience of to-day, I hardly think that I shall again." So the poor in that part of the city came to look for the coming of the

little girl in gray, who never failed to bring aid and sympathy, and kindly words with her.

"The last stranger to come this year," said Madie, as she took her place at the breakfast table, on the thirty-first of December. "Thinking about the three hundred and sixty-four days that have gone by makes me sad."

"You had better think of what you will wear 'to receive' in to-morrow," said Mrs. Lawrence, who had called to make final arrangements for the New Years reception.

"I decided as to that weeks go. I shall wear Aunt Sarah's birthday gift." For a moment a smile actually lighted the face of her grim relative.

"Well, now about the luncheon." Mrs. Lawrence presented her bill of fare as she spoke.

"Please excuse me for speaking, cousin Hattie, but I cannot come if you have wine on your tables." Mrs. Lawrence looked annoyed, her mother puzzled, and Mrs. Carter decidedly angry.

"Everyone does have wine," was all the reason Hattie could give.

"I hate to depart from the usual custom," said Mrs. Burton.

"There you have some more of Bell's prudery," said Mrs. Carter, all the more crossly, because she knew that her niece was right and the others were wrong.

Mr. Burton made no comments until Madie had gone to her work. Then when appealed to, said, "Madie is in the right, and she will not receive with you unless you banish wine from your bill of fare."

"It will look badly not to have her present, so I will have to yield, but I do not think it at all nice of her to do so," said Hattie.

"Then you will really, 'of two evils choose the least,'" said her father humorously.

Because of the moral firmness of her western cousin, Mrs. Lawrence, who was a society leader, served tea and coffee, but no intoxicants on that New Years day.

"Madie is absolutely pretty in her ruby dress," Aunt Sarah graciously declared.

Uncle Joe and Mr. Lawrence, having made their round of calls, were rested, when they returned, at sight of the brilliant establishment and the prettily-dressed women.

"I am just as tired as if I had been hard at work all day," said Madie, as she dropped into a chair before the grate in her room, and opened her portfolio to write a long letter home.

CHAPTER XXV.

BRAIN AND HEART.

The winter was a gay one, and the lady reporters were very busy.

"I wish when people are resolved to marry that they would choose some other time than 7:30 a. m. for the ceremony," said Madie one morning in February, after having been out late the night before. "I feel terribly old to-day."

"When Lent begins the fashionable world will subside into comparative quiet," said Mrs. Burton who had already noticed how weary her niece really looked.

Madie went out into the clear, frosty air of the morning. Little boys were running along the street leaving delicate envelopes and parcels at many of the doors. "Why, it is St. Valentine's day, and I had quite forgotten it. The day is cold and cheerless, if the sun does shine brightly. It says good morning to your face and leaves you there as if its duty were done; it does not extend its bright influence beyond to warm the heart. Like some people it is chillingly polite. The wedding reminds me of the day—showy, but with nothing very tender about it. Here I have dreamed the entire morning. I will go and see Jean and try and get awake." As she turned a corner she met Mr. McLean.

"Through for the day?" he enquired.

"Until evening only. I am going to call on Miss Cragie. She has not been well for a few days."

"I hope it is nothing serious."

"Only a severe cold. It will keep her from work for a time. She would not give up until really ill."

"I hear words of praise for you whenever I go to your district."

"I am fully repaid for the little I have done then."

"Do you report to-morrow night?"

"I do not think I shall. I have received no notice as yet."

"I was going to your uncle's when I met you. Gough speaks to-morrow evening at Music Hall. Will you go?" He had never given an invitation of this kind, and was awkward in proffering the request.

"Thank you! it will be a relief to listen and not be obliged to transfer it to paper."

Madie ran up to her friend's room. "Alone all day? That must seem strange to you."

"It seems very nice once in a while. I have had a real pleasant time getting acquainted with myself."

"Well, how do you like *you*?"

"Quite well to-day, but there are times when it makes me almost frantic to think that I will have to spend all my life with me."

Madie laughed. "Did you receive any valentines?"

"No; but a pleasant, friendly letter came this morning, and that is much nicer. The days when valentines 'gladdened my senses and charmed my heart' have passed away with other youthful pleasures; I used to get them when I was at the gushing age, but those are by-gone days. Still," she continued, speaking as if to herself, "I like to go back even now, to memory's beautiful past, and to be a child while there, and then I enjoy fervently and heartily my childhood days. I wonder if, as the years lengthen, I will still cherish a tender feeling for childish things because of what was, or will I scoff at youthful sports and enjoyments, as so many middle-aged and elderly people do? It is painful to see a child who takes pleasure in nothing childish. There is too much *oldness* in the world. I have seen a few blessed old people who carried their youthful hearts with them; they are very different from the gushing elders, who try to *appear* young, yet their very manners prove that it is the years that have swept over them which they are trying to make you forget, and not the kindly, youthful feeling that has remained with them."

"I see you have not finished visiting with yourself, so I will leave you."

"Stay to dinner, and I will become more general in my conversation."

"I shall have to go to Uncle Joe's before I go out for the evening. Can I do anything for you before I go?"

"No, dear, you have done a great deal for me by calling here this afternoon."

When Madie reached home, she found a fair-haired lady in conversation with her Aunt Anna.

"Mrs. LaSelle, this is my niece."

"Miss Burton, I have been trying to call on you ever since you came, but I have a private school, and my elder daughter is not at all well, so the days have gone by and you have been neglected."

Madie's heart went out to the pleasant lady immediately; she spoke impulsively. "I am glad you have called now, at any rate. I have often noticed your little ones at the window when passing; and I remember distinctly of meeting you on a car a few days after I came; I have remembered your face."

Mrs. LaSelle had seen trouble, but her sprightly nature rebounded quickly, and those who knew her welcomed her as cheerfully as a ray of light to their home.

"Is your little girl better?"

"I think so; she has never been very strong. My little boy and younger daughter love to romp and play, but she has never done so. She is such a quiet child. Come and see me very soon, will you not?"

"Yes, I shall want to see you, and am anxious to talk with the children. I have brothers and sisters at home."

"I shall expect you. How pretty your plants are! Mine do not do well this winter. Annie may be wanting me and I must hurry home."

"I thought, when I first saw her, that I should like to know her, and now I feel acquainted," said Madie, when the caller had gone.

"She is an officer's widow. I think her husband died

while in the regular service, as I have heard her speak of being out on the plains. She is very busy and goes but little," said Mrs. Burton.

When Madie came back the next evening she noticed a wan little face at the window, and two round eager faces beside it. "Aunty, may I have a few of your roses? I am going to take them over to Annie LaSelle."

"Certainly, Madie, and gather some geraniums and fuchsias, too."

She ran across the street. Mrs. LaSelle met her in the doorway. "I am just as glad as can be! Come right in. Annie, see what Miss Burton has brought you." The pale face was already buried in the rich blossoms. "Albert, Irene, this is Miss Burton." The children came forward shyly, but Madie drew them toward her and all three were soon interested in the little lady, who understood so well what would please the children. She told them of her own brothers and sisters, and of the merry times they had at home. Annie smiled from her corner and once laughed outright.

"I wish you'd stay longer," said Irene sorrowfully, when she bade them good night.

"I can't now, but I will come again."

"Will you have to wait for mamma to return your call?"

"No, I think not," said Madie, bending over and taking Annie's little transparent hand in her own.

"Come every day, please," whispered the invalid.

"I will whenever I can possibly do so."

"She likes to have me read to her," said Mrs. LaSelle.

"I have a few books that I think would interest you, and I will try and give you a few minutes to-morrow." Madie kissed her and went back to her uncle's.

Mr. McLean was thirty-five years of age and had never escorted a young lady anywhere, except on a missionary round, until this evening. He was a little surprised himself at the strange proceeding.

Madie was full of fancies and could not keep from ut-

tering some of them. She even felt as if she were acquainted with him to-night.

The lecturer stirred the audience; melted them to tears; and awoke shouts of laughter, by his stories, personations and original arguments. "He draws a crowded house every time he comes and has for more than twenty years," Madie heard a gentleman behind her say to a friend.

Mr. McLean was coldly critical, yet for a moment he felt as if he needed some of this man's fire, and pathos, and wit.

Madie enjoyed it thoroughly. "He felt every word he said and that gave a double meaning to his sentences. He interested his audience because he was himself interested. I must remember to tell my folks at home about it."

"When do you go home?"

"I have planned to go for a little while next summer. I am not going to tell them a word of my coming, for I want to surprise them. It will add to the pleasure of all. I do not intend to stay here more than two years; that is if I am successful."

For an instant this thought flashed through the man's mind: "How dreary it will be in the city without her," but he resolutely put it from him. People who listened to his sermons, however, noticed that they were more tender and full of forgiveness than formerly, and wondered not a little at the change.

"You ought not to encourage beggars as you do, when you are here with us. Our back door will soon be thronged," said Mrs. Carter the next day.

"But, Aunt Sarah, I like to help them if they are in need," Madie said coaxingly.

"A great many of them do not need help any more than you yourself."

"Then I am sorry for *them*, if they are wicked enough to cheat me in this way. Some of them need help and I cannot discriminate between the *needy* and the *needless*. I had rather believe nine guilty persons innocent than one innocent person guilty."

"Well, we'll not argue, but I think it wrong to offer a premium on laziness. You are undeniably stingy in the purchasing of your own clothing. Such a good salary as you receive and only two new dresses since you came, and one of those I gave to you."

"I am putting by my money for a purpose; getting ready to take care of the family, if it is necessary."

"You'll undoubtedly be called upon, but you will be a long time in getting ready."

Madie had become accustomed to her aunt's sneers, and could keep the tears back, as she could not at first, yet each word stung her.

"I will go over and read to Annie, and that will quiet me," she thought.

Taking *A Summer in Leslie Goldthwaite's Life*, from her shelves, she went to her new friends, and was soon entertaining the mother and children with the pleasant story, given in her sweet, sympathetic voice. She knew nothing of the tricks of elocution, but each character stood before them as she read.

Irene leaned upon her and the others sat very near. "Will you come to-morrow?" Annie asked wistfully.

"Every day, if I can." It was very pleasant for Madie to know that one face brightened at her coming, that one pair of eyes followed her every day when she went to her work.

"I am not going to the office at all to-morrow," Madie announced one day toward the end of the month.

"I am going to have Annie spend the day with me." She went for her early in the morning, helped her tenderly across the street, and entertained her with pictures, and music, and pleasant stories.

"Are you very tired?" Mrs. LaSelle enquired when she was carried home to her.

"A little; but I am happy; the smile was still on her lips as she sank back among the soft pillows. When she had rested, she told her mamma, Albert and Irene, how the day had been spent, and repeated

some of the funny anecdotes that Madie had told and read to her.

"She is coming to stay with me some evening before long, and sing me to sleep."

"I heard something dreadfully mean to-day," Mrs. Carter was saying when Madie returned from Mrs. LaSelle's, "and I just think it ought to be published."

"Don't tell it, please," said Madie hurriedly. "When people hear of a wicked deed or saying, they say 'that ought to be published!' When I can see or hear anything nice, I say 'that ought to be published, and then our readers will know that the world is growing better.' When I have control of a paper or magazine, that is what I am going to do. My paper shall be a civilizer, and a clean sheet."

"Oh, you aspire to the position of editor in chief. I presume your paper will be perfect. Madeline, you grow more egotistical every day."

Madie did not reply. She had never come so near to divulging her cherished plans as she had on this evening, and she was frightened at her rashness.

When she went to the office the next morning, the editor handed her a note from Miss Cragie.

"DEAR MADIE:

Come to me after church, Sunday. My cold is no better.

JEAN."

The editor seemed provoked at her for being sick. "It inconveniences us greatly."

"I will do some of the extra work. I think Miss Cragie is inconvenienced herself by this illness."

"I have no doubt but she is; still, our paper has to be gotten out, full of news, no matter what happens." He turned to his desk and began to write rapidly, but paused in a few moments, and turned to Madie: "If you could help us with the music or dramatic reporting this evening!"

"I will do all I can. Miss Jean has never failed to help me with my work."

"I am greatly obliged, and will see to the rest."

It was late when Madie reached the corner where the brown cottage stood. "I must run in for a minute, or Annie will miss me."

She told of a collision she had witnessed, between a woman with a poodle, and a newsboy, as the former was leaving and the latter entering a crowded car; and left Annie in smiles.

Mr. McLean was in the back parlor talking with Mrs. Carter. "I believe Aunt Sarah likes him," she thought. She talked with both for a few moments and then excused herself.

"Come back; Mr. McLean has been talking with me for some time, and you ought to entertain him."

"I think, auntie, that Mr. McLean will excuse me when I tell him that I have to go out again to-night."

"Why, Madeline! Thomas is away, and who will go with you? Your uncle and aunt are both at Hattie's. You were so late home to dinner that we did not think you would go back again to-night."

"I shall have to hurry back alone, then," she called from the stairs, half vexed with her aunt for bringing the affair out before Mr. McLean.

When she returned the minister was still there.

"Miss Burton, if you will allow me, I will willingly accompany you."

"It is very awkward; I am doing Miss Cragie's work to-night, and Thomas was not aware of this change in the programme of my work."

"I understand, and, because of the understanding, I am at your service," he said pleasantly.

"I am greatly obliged to you, and will be ready in a moment."

The opera was new to Madie; and the Swedish songstress was at her best. She did not see the magnificent toilettes, nor hear the applause; watching the stage as if it were all for her, and writing rapidly when the curtain dropped.

When the last note faded like some sweet flower on

the perfumed air, the fair singer was called to the front and sang a familiar ballad in her rich tender voice.

"Let us go," said Madie, exerting all her powers of self-control to keep back the sobs. "I can't stay here any longer." When she was seated in the coupe, the tears would come; "I must leave this copy at the office." Mr. McLean carried it in for her.

"I ought to beg your pardon for hurrying you away in that style. It was foolish, perhaps, but I could see mamma and Christa and all the dear ones at home, and it seemed as if my heart would break."

No text presented itself just then, but he spoke almost tenderly to her. "Miss Madeline"—using her given name for the first time—"I am very sorry to see you so homesick and grieved, but you must not put your strongest love on earthly things."

His words dried Madie's tears effectually.

"If I did not love my mother I do not believe I could find any love in my heart to give to God, for I would not be capable of great affection."

"I did not wish you to understand that I thought it was wrong for you to like your own people. It is perfectly right and proper."

"When I love people, I love them a great deal and am happy when with them."

A strange impulse, to tell her that he wished he could be counted among those she loved, came upon him. "I believe she would be a help to me. But no; I had better not! I have given my whole heart to my Father."

"I wonder if I have offended him. I hope not, for he has been so kind to me." She put out her hand timidly: "Mr. McLean, did I say anything to annoy you?"

"I should be very foolish, indeed, to be so easily annoyed." The tear-stained face was near to his own; he drew nearer, but he prided himself on his perfect self-control and leaned back in the corner of the carriage.

When he returned to his lodgings he thought long and seriously. "I will study her more closely. She interests me more than anyone I have ever met, and yet I

cannot understand why it so." He tried to analyze this new affection and its cause. He was destined to learn that love and the people we love and the reason we love them, is as far beyond human ken as is the Author of Love and Faith and Hope. When we reach this point we are on the borderland between the finite and infinite.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AS VARIED AS LIFE.

Mrs. LaSelle's face was very sad when Madie called to see Annie one afternoon, having finished her work early. "I will stay with our patient while you go for a walk; you will feel better after an airing."

"I cannot go to-day; Annie is not so well."

"Perhaps I might disturb her, so I will not go in, but will go to see my friend Jean, instead."

The sharp ears of the sick child had caught her words, "Miss Burton."

"Well, dear."

"Is your friend very sick?"

"She cannot leave the house, but I hope she is not 'very sick.'"

"Is she all alone?"

"There are others in the boarding-house, but she is alone, in her room, nearly all the time."

Annie turned her face to the wall, that Madie might not see her disappointment.

"My friend does not expect me until to-morrow, so I will stay with you, darling."

The little girl was smiling now. "I do not want to be selfish, but I have looked for you all day." Madie read a letter from Bert and Benjie, and then finished the book she had been reading aloud.

"Tell us some of your own stories, please; I think I like them best." So Madie told one pleasant story after another, and even restless Albert sat still and listened to them.

"Mamma," whispered Irene, "Annie wants Miss Burton to stay to dinner."

"Tell her to ask her, dear." Annie gladly gave the invitation, which Madie readily accepted.

Mother and children bowed their heads and said a silent grace when seated around the daintily-arranged table.

"It is almost like home here," said Madie.

"I am glad of that," said her hostess.

"It will make you come oftener, won't it?" asked Annie.

"I shall spare you a few minutes every day while I am here." Madie kept her word. No matter how much there was to do, nor whether Aunt Sarah fretted or scolded, she visited the sick child daily.

Mrs. LaSelle took a shawl from the wardrobe and went down to the street with Madie.

"What do you want to tell me?" she asked, taking the mother's arm.

"I took Annie to a physician yesterday. He told me her lungs were badly affected and that there was no hope for her."

Madie put her arms around her. "Oh, my dear, how sorry I am."

"I was afraid of it before I consulted a physician. She is so like her father. He died of consumption. I have to be cheerful before the children, but it is so hard."

"Dear Mrs. LaSelle, I will try to help you bear this. She may be better when spring comes."

When the sad mother joined her little ones, Irene called out in childish surprise. "Why, mamma, what makes your eyes so red?"

"You must go to your lessons, Albert," she said, ignoring the question.

Annie looked at her with her brilliant, hollow eyes, but did not say a word.

The next day Madie spent an hour with the invalid, before she went to her friend. "She is surely better to-day. She looks so much brighter. I almost know she will be well when the weather gets pleasanter," she said to Mrs. LaSelle.

"I wish I could think so," was the sad answer.

Miss Cragie was rapidly convalescing. "I can go to work to-morrow," she said. "How did you get along with the extra work?"

"Nicely. Mr. McLean was my escort one evening to the opera." Miss Cragie looked annoyed.

"I was sorry I was not able to hear Gough. I always like to hear him."

"I heard him. Mr. McLean went with me there, too."

"Worse and worse," Jean thought, vexed at herself for being ill.

"We are going to hear Wendell Philips next week." Madie told this to her friend, because she thought she would rejoice with her at this opportunity to see and hear. She looked upon Mr. McLean very much as she did upon her uncle.

"He is going to beat me in spite of my efforts!"

"I wonder what his given name is," said Madie.

"Whose? Mr. McLean's? He never has had any, I think. I couldn't imagine anyone as being familiar enough to use a Christian name when addressing him. His mother must have understood this. I presume it was a very dignified pleasure to his parents when *Mr.* McLean took his first steps and began to talk."

Madie did not exactly enjoy these remarks, as her countenance proved.

"I am in one of my moods to-night, so bear with me, please. Stay to dinner; you will be doing regular missionary work. If you don't, Mrs. Howe will *sting* away, and I shall feel positively wicked before the meal is ended."

"I am anxious to do all the good I can," said Madie, as she removed her hat.

"It is nice to have you with me; I can talk or gloom, just as I choose, and if one wishes to read, the other politely allows her to do so."

"I hope your cold is better," Mr. Warren said as they took their places at the table.

"Much better, thank you."

"I see you have had our young friend with you, so the afternoon has been pleasant," he said. Madie felt quite at her ease when she was seated beside the old gentleman.

Mrs. Howe came sailing in, "Good evening all! Miss

Burton, I am really delighted to see you!" There was so much unreality in the words, that Madie felt as if she had hardly heard them. "Miss Cragie, you did not attend service to-day!" Mrs. Howe had so much assurance, that she usually *said* her questions instead of asking them.

"No, I am saving myself for to-morrow's work."

"Don't you think, my dear, that you should have given a little of your strength to the Lord to-day, instead of saving it all for self to-morrow?"

"I think I have given more to him than I would had I taxed my strength to go to church."

"I went, and there was a goodly representation from this house," said Edie Lenox. "I wore my new suit, but my gloves do not match it exactly. You don't know how badly I felt."

"Having experienced trouble myself, I can sympathize with you in your affliction." Miss Cragie looked so solemn as she spoke, that Miss Lenox could not discern whether she were in jest or earnest.

Mr. Warner was slightly amused. Mrs. Howe broke the silence. "You attended what church, Miss Burton?"

"The Episcopal, that is the church my people have always attended."

"Then you were brought up in that church?"

"Yes."

"They are a denomination I know very little about; but I guess they are very nice," Mrs. Thomas hastened to say.

"Very much like the Roman Catholics—altogether too free and liberal to suit me," said Mrs. Howe, as she leaned back to wait for the dessert. Madie flushed vividly.

Miss Cragie looked at the fat lady opposite, and said frankly: "You have proven by your own words, that the denominations are not alike."

She knew that Mrs. Howe would smile at her, and berate her soundly to the other boarders, but she did not hesitate to speak for Madie, whose feelings had been wounded.

"Perhaps I said more than I should, but I am so devoted to my own church."

"So, I presume, is my friend."

Mrs. Howe was very angry; but still smiling, she said: "I beg your pardon, Miss Burton."

"Please do not do that; every person has a right to her opinion," said Madie.

"I thought that Miss Cragie would only stand on the defensive for her own church. I suppose you consider that above reproach."

"I think that it will average, as one of the best and one of the worst persons I ever knew belonged to it," she answered composedly.

"Oh, Mrs. Howe, you have on your new satin and I never noticed it until now," lisped Miss Lenox, who was not enjoying the conversation.

"Yes, pet, I finished it last night."

"You said yesterday that the dressmaker had not fixed the trimming as you wished, and you would not have time to alter it yourself, so I did not expect to see you wear it to-day."

"Well, I did finish it. I had so many callers that I was afraid I could not, and I particularly wished to wear it to-day, so I gathered up the dress and went to my room, and prayed that I might be left alone and permitted to finish my dress. I did not have another interruption and finished the garment early in the evening. I believe in prayer, Miss Cragie."

"I also believe in prayer, but I could not do *that*. I have too much respect for God to ask him to let me finish a fashionable garment 'for Jesus' sake.'" Her clear voice was low and reverent.

"Every church has much of good in it; I admire anyone who is honest and consistent in his belief." Madie looked gratefully at Mr. Warren for his liberal speech.

When they returned to the parlors Madie and Miss Cragie went in for a time.

"Please sing something for me," Mr. Warren requested of Madie. She sang a few of the old-time airs, songs that

brought back his boyhood and his mother, and he saw the first love of his youth.

"Thank you, my child, they have been real memory revivers."

Miss Cragie took a handsomely finished photograph from the table. "When did you have this done, Miss Lenox?"

"They were sent home last night. Do you think it is so very horrid?"

"No. It is a very good picture."

"Will you look at mine?" Miss Lenox' shadow handed her one of his own.

"I think I had rather look at ladies' photographs than gentlemen's, the transition is not so great," Jean said, surveying the faces critically. "Edie looks as if she were posed for a picture most of the time; may I have one?"

Miss Lenox was pleased with the request; she really admired this independent woman, if she did sometimes fail to understand her.

Miss Cragie alternately petted and teased her. "I really like the child; you see I have not yet outgrown my love for dolls," she had said to Madie that evening before dinner.

"You can have it, if you wish. I didn't think you would care enough for my photograph to ask for it. I have something of importance to tell you," she said, leaning her head over until it touched Jean's shoulder.

"What is it? But, wait just a moment until I have spoken to Mrs. Howe." That lady was moving along in her ponderous way. Jean met her as she was about to ascend the stairs. "Mrs. Howe," frankly extending her hand, "I am sorry that I said as much as I did at dinner. You are older than I, and I should have been more considerate of your feelings. The fact is I have been alone too much lately. It is no wonder that I am impolite, after having spent so much time with so rude a companion." Mrs. Howe smiled and took the proffered hand.

"I forgive you, certainly," she said in such an exasperating tone that Jean felt almost angry again. "Of course I cannot forget, I do not think it right or just to overlook these things."

"Do you believe in cherishing ill-will?"

"I do not believe in saying things that one needs to take back; I never do myself."

"Are you really never sorry for anything you say or do?"

"I am always very careful."

"Then I am to understand that forgiveness is not in your religion."

"Forgiveness, but not forgetfulness."

"Then you do not take even *half* of the law, for you only remember in order to cherish spite."

Mrs. Howe was too deceitful to carry on a frank discussion. "We will not talk further on the subject. Good night, Miss Cragie."

Before the next evening everyone in the house knew that Mrs. Howe disliked Jean cordially, and yet they could see no difference in her actions toward the girl.

"When she says anything, it all comes back to me with startling distinctness," she said to Mr. Warren.

"Miss Jean never says aught against you; she says she does not believe in cherishing ill-will toward anyone."

"Well, I do! I think it is perfectly right; and if Miss Cragie were to go where I never could see her again, I should not be at all sorry."

Jean, standing outside the door, tired and discouraged, said: "I am glad Christ is to judge me instead of you." The others were silent.

So these two, because of different natures and different views, drifted apart; the one, sensitive and hurt, but always frank; the other, self-righteous and secretive; when each might have found a friend in the other.

On this evening, Jean, who had been disappointed at having her frank confession of wrong doing received in such a manner, went slowly back to the parlor. Mr. War-

ren and Madie were visiting together. She went to Miss Lenox. "What have you to tell me, Edie?"

"Come up to my room, I cannot tell it here."

Smiling in spite of her heavy heart, Jean followed the child-woman to her room.

"I am going to let you guess."

"I am sure that I cannot."

"Well then, see!" and she turned the solitaire on her finger so that Jean could see its brilliant light.

"Engaged to Mr. Erle?"

"Yes."

"It is not hard to match such an article, and I ought not to be surprised," she thought to herself.

"I hope you will always be glad of this contract you have made," she said to Edie.

"Oh, I am sure I shall. Mamma is satisfied, and so are all his people."

"That is pleasant for both. I must go back or Madie will feel that I am neglecting her."

"You can come and live with us when you get too old to work," with a sudden burst of generosity. "And you can oversee the house if you feel as if you must have something to occupy your mind and time."

"I am very grateful, but if I am an old maid I shall be one for my own convenience. I am anxious to know what sort of a person I would be if I had nothing to do."

Miss Cragie looked with new interest at the young gentleman who was soon to become a Benedict. "He is really in love, and no one can doubt that Mrs. Lenox is not highly pleased with this turn of affairs."

Edie sat near her lover, a little shy and pleased with his attention.

"If she had been differently reared and taught, or were to marry an earnest, manly man, she would develop into a very sweet, lovable woman. He has a fine home—or his father will give him one—a pet pointer and a horse. A wife, and canary, each in a handsome cage, will complete his picture of domestic bliss. I am afraid he has not enough decision of character. I must not think people

over in this way. I shall soon be like Mrs. Howe, and have the virtues and vices of my acquaintances tabulated, so that I can refer to them at any time." Jean plunged into gay conversation, while the entire company wondered at her wit.

During the following weeks Mr. McLean saw very little of Madie, who was occupied with her reportorial duties, trying to attend the Lenten services, and make her daily visits to her sick friend. One morning he received a note:

"MY FRIEND:—I must give my poor people back to you for a time. I feel as if I were needed more somewhere else. I may be able to take up the work by and by. Be assured that I will if I possibly can.

Respectfully yours,

MADELINE BURTON."

"She has become tired of the work, I presume. It is well that I have discovered her inability now, or I might have committed myself." The day was a little gray after that, and he did not feel as satisfied with his work as usual.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I BELIEVE YOU.

They were leaving the church one morning after an unusually beautiful service, when Madie said to her uncle, "I left all my work and care outside. Christ seems very near to me during these days. The services of commemoration come right into our daily work, and I like it to be that way."

"Even if you meet the perplexing questions outside, you will be all the better able to solve them, I think. These noon prayer meetings that they are establishing in our large cities are a blessing to very many." As Mr. Burton ceased speaking, Albert LaSelle came to Madie.

"Mamma wants to know, can you come over and read to Annie. She has to go away just at night, and Annie won't have anyone but you."

"I will come as soon as I can get away. I suppose your mamma will not go until I get there."

"No, ma'am. She said she would wait."

"Annie is so patient she makes me ashamed," said Madie.

"She is a very sweet child, and I will try and take her through the park this afternoon."

"Oh, Uncle Joe, if you only could! Please not to tell her, Albert, for she will be so disappointed if she cannot go. Can you take little Janie for a short ride, after you have taken Annie?"

"I think it very likely, if I and my horses keep well," he answered in a soberly funny way.

Each child had a lovely ride through the park, visiting the green house and seeing the bears in their winter quarters. Annie fed them a part of her apple.

Mr. Burton laid her on the couch just as Madie entered.

"I shall come again, very soon," he promised, and went out from the child's presence with a mist before his eyes.

Annie closed her eyes and lay quietly for some time. Madie thought she had never seen a purer, fairer face. "She will get away from a great deal of care and trouble, but I hate to give her up, and it will be terrible for her mother."

"Miss Burton."

"Call me Madie, my dear."

"Madie, will you read to me something from the Bible? I would like to hear that psalm, 'The Lord is my Shepherd.'"

The words were familiar to Madie, or she could not have read them, as her sight was dimmed with tears.

Annie repeated slowly: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

"Don't," said Madie, sobbing.

"I am going to die, Madie; it has hurt me in here so long. It hurt for a good while before I told mamma." The little hands were laid over the tortured lungs. "Poor mamma has had so many things to be sorry for and this will be another."

"Maybe you will get better when it gets warm and pleasant."

"No. I shall never get better. Papa will be very glad to see me. Don't you think so?"

With a faith born of sudden conviction Madie answered, "Yes."

"Don't tell mamma what I have said. She can't bear it yet."

Madie could not speak. "I do not like to see you cry. I am so tired; will you sing me to sleep?"

When Mrs. LaSelle returned she found Annie asleep in Madie's arms.

"Don't disturb her; let her rest; she was very tired."

Madie rocked back and forth, singing a soft, sweet lullaby. The curtain was up and the lamp tossed its bright rays out into the street, because there was enough to

spare to the passers-by. The tall, weary man, who had been trying to conquer the impulse of his heart, went down from Mr. Burton's door—not finding the girl who occupied so much of his thoughts—and saw across the street the cosy room and the sweet home picture. Just a hint of the sweet melody floated out to him. “I shall not be doubtful of her zeal in the work again.”

His own dreary room seemed hateful to him, in comparison. “I love her, and if God so wills it she shall be my wife. I know now why she has given up her work. It shall be *our* work some day.”

People wondered more and more what had come over their grave pastor. “He just looks right at us now and *sees* us *every time* and smiles like everything,” observed one newsboy to another on the following Sabbath.

When Annie awoke she found a dainty little supper prepared for her. “Are you very tired?” she asked anxiously.

“No, rested because you are.”

“Could you meet me at the car and go with me to the pension office to-morrow? I failed to meet my friends to-day. It is necessary to have two witnesses, and I cannot go nor send word to anyone to-night. You know that I am Mrs. LaSelle. Would it be asking too much for you to identify me? I cannot leave Annie long, and I must have the money. I will not draw again for three months. Of course, if you have any compunctions of conscience, I do not want you to do it.”

“You say that all I will have to do will be to testify that you are Mrs. LaSelle?”

“That is all. Shall I show you my papers?”

“Do not mind. I will meet you at the terminus of our line of cars to-morrow afternoon.”

At the appointed hour Madie went to meet her friend. She waited until several cars had come and gone. “I shall have to go back to the office. Something has happened to prevent her coming.”

Another car came rolling along. Mrs. LaSelle stepped from the platform as soon as it halted. “Annie is much

worse. I couldn't leave her until Mrs. Hale came to stay with her. We must hurry, or the office will be closed."

"Will your other friend meet you there?"

"He said he would, last night." But when they reached the large building they could not see a familiar face.

"Oh, dear, what shall I do? I promised Annie a quail and some other delicacies. She will be so disappointed. This is the last day, too." Madie looked at her watch. It lacked only fifteen minutes of the hour for closing.

Nervous and anxious, Mrs. LaSelle walked up and down the hall. "I cannot see the need of so much 'red tape,' still, I presume they are often imposed upon, even now."

A large, distinguished-looking man, who had been watching them since they entered, came a little nearer. "Pshaw! I am always meddling; very likely she is disappointed in her last new dress. She looks as if she were troubled about something more serious than that. They must be expecting someone." These thoughts passed rapidly through his mind.

"How much more time have we?"

"Eight minutes," Madie answered.

"Something must be done," she said desperately.

"You *must* have another witness?"

"Yes."

Madie stepped toward the elevator. "That will not go up again to-night," the stranger politely informed her.

"Oh, but we must go!" said Madie tearfully. "Annie is so sick."

"Who is Annie?"

"This lady's little girl. She wants to draw her pension, and I am the only one with her; the gentleman who was to meet us has not come."

Five minutes only were left. It seemed as if time leaped along as rapidly as it does in happier days.

"Couldn't you go with us, sir? This lady is Mrs. LaSelle; she is an officer's widow. Believe me, I would not say it if it were not true."

The man, listening to her words, thought, "If it were

not so I would have told you." He had been a politician for years, with trickery and deceit all about him, and many had heard him say: "I have not a particle of faith in the world." Yet, he showed a different element in his nature on this evening.

"My child, I believe you implicitly."

He touched the bell and the elevator came slowly up; at the second floor it halted.

"It's no use in trying; we can't make it to-night; the steam is exhausted."

"Let us out, then," said the stranger. He hurried the ladies along the hall and up the stairs. The clerks bowed politely as they entered, and the man acknowledged the recognition. The signatures were given, and the oath taken. Madie glanced at the name below her own; it was that of a distinguished member of congress.

When they reached the outer door, Mrs. LaSelle thanked him many times. Madie turned to him: "I shall remember your kindness as long as I live."

"And I shall remember your trust, that revived my own faith in the world. I hope the little girl will be better soon." Touching his hat to each, he hurried down the crowded street.

Ever after this Madie read this man's speeches with a new interest. When Annie heard of his kindness she said: "I cannot see him to thank him; but I'll ask God if he won't help him in some way."

When more than a year afterward, a bill passed through Congress which was a benefit to many people, and this man's name stood at the head, Madie thought "Annie's prayer is answered."

The private school was abandoned, and Mrs. LaSelle devoted those early spring days to her child.

Madie had told so much of the little patient in her letters home, that never a letter came now that had not some pleasant anecdote or loving message to Annie from Mrs. Burton and the children; the entire letter was usually read to her. Madie recalled all the pleasant and amusing

incidents of her daily life, for the benefit of the little girl, who was now so weak she could not go about the house.

Mr. Burton carried her down to the carriage daily, took her for a short ride and carried her back again; but one day they found she was too weak to ride even a short distance.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RESOLUTIONS AND REFORMATION.

A reception was given to all the theological schools in and around the city. Madie attended with a student and his wife from the seminary near her uncle's. This was the first reception given in a private house. The colleges had heretofore entertained in turn.

"If anyone doubts the cheerful influence of Christianity, he ought to be here to night, to see the different sects mingle together in this happy, friendly way. As a sectarian, I would stand about one on the scale of a hundred," a theological professor frankly confessed to Madie.

"That is as it should be, I think. I have no patience with anyone who is always saying '*our church.*' Wouldn't it be better for all to say '*the church?*' Every spire of every church points upward, and that is what its members ought to do; then we would all climb together."

Mr. McLean, standing near, examining that immense library, was surprised to find himself agreeing with her. Later he went to her. "It is an agreeable surprise to see you here. When will you come to my school? I have missed you."

"Have you? I am sorry; but I could not come. I spend all the time I possibly can with Annie LaSelle."

"I know," he said approvingly. "Is she any better?"

"No. I am afraid she never will be well again. If I spend Sunday morning with her, perhaps I can come to your class in the afternoon."

"I shall look for you, then."

"What a magnificent collection of books! I enjoy a library more than anything else."

"I think a great deal of my books and pictures and should like to have you see them. Will you come with

your aunt some day when you are at leisure; that is if she will come?"

"I am sure she will."

"And you?"

"Oh, I too, of course," and she arose to join her friends who were coming toward her.

When Miss Cragie heard of the proposed visit she was not at all pleased. "I think a partner in a love affair is a superfluous person, but I do not like to see my warm-hearted friend sacrificed in this way. I shall manage to be invited there myself," she soliloquized as she walked slowly up and down her room.

The next Sabbath she went to the mission school. Madie did not arrive until the classes had taken their places. She hurriedly entered the Bible class. A few observant people noticed that there was a sudden lighting up of their pastor's grave face as if a sunbeam had fallen across it, but Miss Cragie was the only one who connected it with the entrance of the quiet little lady beside her.

The lesson was discussed, but Jean did not take any part in either question or explanation.

Mr. McLean walked back with them as he had become accustomed to do. Madie, studying out the meaning of the lesson, spoke out the finale of her thoughts. "You asked whether 'Christ died to save all mankind or for truth?' and the class and yourself decided that 'He died to save mankind;' now if he died to save all people, and those who believe in him are saved, or if he died for the truth and those who accept it are saved, it seems to me they are inseparable."

He tried to explain it to her. "There are so many things that I cannot understand."

"I am very thankful that you cannot, Madie, and more thankful that you are *aware* of the fact. When we explain God's words, and thoughts, and plans, he ceases to be a God to us," said Jean Cragie.

"Perhaps it is presumptuous. I visited the legislature of our state, with papa, the winter before we went West,

and saw them dispose of bill after bill. I have thought of that disposing and expounding and 'laying on the table' of the law often since, when hearing God's word and law reasoned out from the pulpit as if it were a matter of *business* to explain Him to a congregation. I am sorry to say it, but I have once or twice heard what sounded like an *apology* for Him. People whose motives I readily understand, I am apt to take very little interest in. There is nothing to awaken or continue the interest. But we shall have all eternity to grow up to a knowledge of God. The alphabet is all we can possibly master here.

Mr. McLean again tried to tear this girl's image from his mind and heart. "I should not like a wife to argue with me, as she is doing now." Miss Cragie understood something of his disapproval and was jubilant.

"I think we can go a great way beyond the alphabet here in this world," he said.

"I don't know. It takes a long time to understand our most intimate friends," Madie went on slowly. She was groping carefully along for expression to lead her thoughts into the light. "There are some people who are easily read; others whom I may think I know, but am disappointed in them, often happily, and sometimes sadly. I have met a few people who were too even; there seemed to be no unevenness in their characteristics, each one averaged so well with the others that I would go from alpha to omega and notice no particular one."

"You mean that an average is a good thing, but a *person* who *averages* is apt to be monotonous," said Jean, laughing.

"I confess to being baffled sometimes," said Mr. McLean, taking up the original subject of the conversation.

"Then you are improving. You ought to be baffled; if you are not, you are more presuming with God than with people," said Jean honestly.

He had told Madie on the evening of the reception that he should like to know what afternoon she could be at liberty to visit his room. "I think I can come Wednes-

day, Mr. McLean, if that day is satisfactory to you," she now told him.

"It is; I shall make my calls in the morning."

"I must take this car, as I promised Annie that I would be back as soon as I could."

He hailed the car and walked on with Miss Cragie. The keen-eyed Scotch girl knew that the conversation had displeased him, and with the ready sympathy of her sex tried to say bright and cheerful things. "Miss Cragie, can you come on Wednesday with the others?"

"If I can find time, and it is at an hour when we will not be apt to be busy," she said; while she thought, "you are trying to have a goodly company in order to keep her away from yourself."

When Wednesday came, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Burton and Jean went to see the wonderful library and collection of drawings and paintings in the room where the clergyman *lived*, but had no *home*. Madie could not leave Annie.

Miss Cragie, with her finely cultivated taste, thoroughly appreciated the works of art, and the ancient and modern volumes. She felt pitiful toward this man as she noted the rest of the room utterly devoid of home comforts. "I don't know but it would be better if Madie were here to stay. If I were sure he loved her! He might be a grand man, with human love and sympathy running through the iciness of his nature."

She talked so well, and so self-forgetfully in her new sympathy and understanding of the man, that he was interested and partially forgot the great disappointment at Madie's absence. It was for her alone that he had opened his rooms; but he had resolved to cease his intimacy with her. "I presume it is better to relinquish Miss Cragie's friendship also; they are together so much, I shall have to avoid both," he thought, as he accompanied Jean to her home.

"I am to have a Friday evening conversation club for a few of my friends. Will you join us?"

"I am afraid I cannot. I have little time to devote to

society, and must withdraw from the companionship of my friends more and more. I am one of the world's workers."

"So am I; but I like to rest sometimes alone, and sometimes with others who are workers themselves."

"You have my friendly wishes for the enjoyment of your 'rests;' but I cannot stop my work, lest I should neglect my poor."

"You speak as if you were saying good by."

"Perhaps I am, in a measure."

"Are you not going to let me help you any more?"

"I shall hope to see you at my chapel; but I do not think I ought to ask you to devote much time in visiting our people. Mrs. Grenall will still be my supporter, and I shall devote more of my own time to the work. I have no right to ask another to help to make my burden light. Even in the matter of friends, I shall not be dependent."

"A tall tree may stand in a forest while there is a forest of smaller trees around it; but when they are all taken away, it is twisted and bent and broken. So be careful."

"I understand. But I shall have many around me."

"Not those who will uphold you."

He did not reply until they had reached her door. "Good by! I am glad you came to-day. I do not usually open my house save to those who need me. Yet I am not lonely; my companions that you saw to-day are very interesting."

"Yes, but are none of them contradictory?"

He smiled slightly. "Not aggressively so; I have been pleasuring too much lately; it ceases now."

"A book cannot answer back like a woman is what you mean, I presume. Well, good by," she said lightly.

"I wonder why he thought it necessary to give me up, too?" she queried, when the door had closed between them, and she was ascending the stair. "I believe he was actually afraid that I would marry him myself, and I never dreamed of such an unfortunate arrangement for him." The half pitying, half sarcastic smile had not left her lips when Mrs. Howe tapped at her door.

"I want you—if you will—to give me a little advice in regard to a wedding present for Edie Lenox. I am anxious to purchase some suitable gift; she is such a sweet little thing."

Mrs. Howe was well aware that Jean Cragie's taste was almost faultless, and did not hesitate to ask this favor, although she disliked her greatly. She would ask and receive favors of friend or enemy.

"Get something that will help to make her more of a woman. Pickle-castors are very nice, but she will have three or four of those; and a water set, and all other pieces of silver. I think a set of books would be nice; something not too deep, but really sensible."

"How would Miss Mulock's works answer?"

"Nicely. She cannot read 'A Noble Life' and not be a better woman for it. Stay, Mrs. Howe, do not hurry away. I wish we could be friends," she said wistfully.

Mrs. Howe was touched for a moment, and said: "I wish it too, and can see no reason for our not being."

"Then we will be. I will try very hard to do my part. If I fail, will you kindly come and tell me? I can tell you now that it will not be intentional." Mrs. Howe had never seen Jean in tears before.

"My dear child, do not take it to heart; I am sure you will be more careful hereafter. I must really go now. Come and sit with me some day when you have time." She had not acknowledged herself at fault, but she was glad that Jean had spoken.

"She is a bright, entertaining companion, and it is much pleasanter to be friendly with her," was her comforting conclusion.

Jean was happier than she had been for weeks. "I am so glad that she came in this afternoon; to be sure she threw the blame upon me, but that is her way. If it were not for her deception, I could like her real well. I wouldn't mind her thrusts in my presence if I did not know that they were doubled in my absence. I will see if I can get along without offending her."

Jean bravely adhered to her resolution. She and

Mrs. Howe continued their amicable treaty for several weeks; it was very hard for the elder woman to always speak well of even a friend. One morning Jean accidentally overheard her delivering some uncomplimentary comments upon herself. "I wish I hadn't heard it; I was actually beginning to believe in her." She turned and went back to her room. "I couldn't face her now and be the least particle friendly."

The bride elect came in. "I want to show you my new silk, dear Miss Jean."

"It is very becoming; but what an immense trousseau you are purchasing."

"I told mamma that I was determined to have the best of everything." Mrs. Lenox was not at all wealthy, and had already spent more than her income on her pretty daughter. "I have been over to the house; it is just elegantly furnished, and the rooms are too sweet for anything."

Mr. and Mrs. Erle had just returned from Europe, and were furnishing a double stone front for themselves and their son. "We are perfectly satisfied with Charlie's choice; and we can all be near together. It will seem so nice to be at home again," Mrs. Erle confided to Mrs. Lenox.

Miss Cragie thought on, and Miss Lenox talked on.

"What has she been talking about?" Jean questioned herself, as they went down to dinner; "nothing of great importance, I should judge from her expression; conversation of moment will stamp itself on the face. Her talk doesn't annoy me, for it does not interest me enough to cause me to lose the thread of my own busy thought."

Charlie Erle's face brightened when Edie entered the room. "I am mistaken; he does love her," Jean said in an undertone to Mr. Warren.

"Yes, I think he does, but I am afraid she will be unhappy. My nephew, I am sorry to say, takes a social glass occasionally."

Miss Cragie looked troubled. "Does she know?"

"Her mother does; I thought she ought to know, and

told her myself; she did not consider it in the light of a serious objection, as I hoped she would."

"Here is another friend I must take in charge. I am just the sort of woman who will, when I reach the forties, comb my hair over my ears, wear glasses, give advice, receive confidence, and be called aunt."

"I think that you will have a very honorable if not enjoyable position," said Mr. Warren, smiling. "I think you have a great deal of influence over Edie; will you use it for the future welfare of her and Charlie?"

"If I can. I shall certainly make an effort to save her from unhappiness."

She talked with Edie very tenderly. "I do not want to offend you, nor to interfere with your happiness. I want to help you and Mr. Erle both. He, like many society men, takes wine occasionally. It may grow worse as he grows older."

"He will reform after we are married."

"Ask him to reform before."

"I don't dare."

"Edith, would you like to live in a garret, as many of these drunkard's wives do? Some of them started out in their wedded life as happily as you expect to."

"I do not want him to become a drunkard," she sobbed, for Jean had spoken very gravely.

"Then go and tell him that you cannot become his wife unless he refuses to take even a social glass."

"He will be angry and will not promise."

"If the habit is stronger than his love for you it is better for you to know it now."

"Go with me, Jean."

"No, it will be easier for you both if you go alone."

Charlie was about to leave the house, when the sight of a girlish figure on the stairs arrested him.

"Did you want me, Edie?"

"Yes, I want to talk with you. Will you come to mamma's room?" Mrs. Lenox discreetly withdrew as they entered.

"I am ready to listen, Edie,"

"Do you love me ever so much, Charlie?"

"'Ever so much' my darling! But what is the matter? Do you doubt my love?"

"Would you do something that might be hard for you to do if I asked it of you?"

"I would if it could be done."

"Will you promise never to touch liquor again? It might break my heart some day, Charlie, for it might ruin you. If I were to do anything that would drag me down, you would feel badly, I know."

"There is no danger of my being ruined by a glass now and then. I cannot pledge myself to total abstinence; the fellows would all laugh at me and say I was ruled by you."

"Charlie, are all the 'fellows' more to you than I am?"

"Why of course you are first, Edie."

"But the fear of their ridicule is stronger than the wish for my happiness."

"Oh, confound it, no! How foolishly you are talking, Edie; don't think of it any more, that's a good girl?"

"No man ever said 'confound it' to me before. You had rather give me up than to give up liquor. Here is your ring, Charlie."

"Very well, Miss Lenox. Woman's love is a very powerful thing."

"Man's hatred of ridicule is more powerful." Edie was feeling, for the first time, and thinking, and talking real things. The sad, earnest look was very becoming.

"Why don't you take your ring, Charlie?"

"Because I don't want it."

"You may want to give it to someone else, after a while," she almost groaned, at the dreadful idea of some other girl wearing her ring. "Charlie, take it quick, for I want to leave you. I don't amount to so very much, I know, but it hurts me like everything to think you had rather have wine on your table three times a day than to have me at the head of it. You may take your ring and dissolve it in wine, like Mrs. Julius Cæsar or some of those old Greeks or Romans did," getting terribly

mixed in her excitement and ignorance. "I like chocolate drops and bon-bons and nice things to wear, but I wouldn't have said that I would rather have them than you. If all the girls did laugh at me, I wouldn't have cared a speck, if you had only loved me. I think it is awfully mean of you, Charlie Erle! so there now!"

"Edie, let me put the ring on your finger again."

"No," putting her hands behind her. "I can't, nor I sha'n't. I'll urge mamma to go off somewhere, and I never will be introduced to another young gentleman. See if I am. Charlie, will I have to tell you again to go away?"

Wondering at this new phase of her character, Mr. Erle left the room.

Edie was afraid her mother would come in and find her in tears, so went to Miss Cragie's room. Jean comforted her and praised her for her bravery. "You are one of the brave little women after all." Edie was at first inclined to be vexed with her strong-minded friend for being the cause of her estrangement from her lover, but the woman had been aroused and reason talked to her for the first time. Then, too, she was proud to be complimented by Miss Cragie.

Charlie Erle did not immediately inform his family of the broken engagement. Every hint of the approaching nuptials made him wince. It seemed as if there had never been as much said as upon the night when they were seated around their own table for the first time. "This is better than boarding," said Mr. Erle.

"Better," said his wife. "It is grand! Charlie, you must bring Edie over to-morrow, so that she can give us some idea as to how she wants her apartments arranged. Everything is selected and awaits her orders. She will enjoy coming, I am sure. She is so childishly enthusiastic that it will be a pleasure to have her with us."

Charlie followed his father to the library. "We need not go any further with this affair; Miss Lenox gave me back my ring and freedom last night."

"Why, Charles; what reason did she give you for such conduct?"

"She tried to have me pledge myself never to touch wine again."

"She did?" The old man removed his glasses and wiped them, as if he needed a clearer vision for the full understanding of the subject. "Tell me what she said," and he listened attentively while Charlie told him, as nearly as he could, the exact conversation.

"Well! well! well! Charlie; I really admire her; she is right. If your appetite is larger than your heart, don't offer such a kernel to any woman; if your hatred of ridicule is stronger than your love of right, don't speak to Miss Lenox again; if your fear of human judgment is greater than your faith in eternal justice, don't think to be happy either in this world or the next."

"Father, I don't believe I can give up either one."

"John B. Gough says: 'Every man becomes a drunkard by trying to be a moderate drinker and failing.' Be careful, my boy, or you may be right there. It seems that the little lady has herself decided that you can choose but one. Think about it seriously, Charlie. I do not know that an Erle ever broke his word; if she gets your promise you are both safe. These little, doll-like women are sometimes very firm, especially if they have right on their side."

Charlie was only partially influenced by his father's words, yet he was not quite so strong in his own conceit as he had been before this interview.

Three days later Miss Lenox had a caller—Mr. Erle, Senior. As the Erles had removed from the house almost immediately after the engagement was broken, the boarders had not mistrusted the true state of affairs. Edie had remained in her room, or with Miss Cragie. Mr. Erle came forward as soon as she entered the parlor. "Will you come home with me? Charlie is not well, and wishes to see you."

"Is he going to die?" she gasped.

"No, child; do not be frightened; get your hat and I will tell you on the way."

"Here is my hat; I thought perhaps you had come for me. Let us hurry as fast as we can."

Mr. Erle smiled at her childish frankness and eagerness.

"He drank some champagne the night after his last interview with you, and rode down the boulevards; his horse threw him and it has bruised him up some; in addition to the bruises I think his heart and conscience are both troubled.

"He is ready to give up wine, but there is one little woman who can do a great deal toward healing his heart and easing his conscience. Please be easy with my boy; but for his sake and your own do not accept anything but an absolute promise." Mr. Erle was sadly in earnest.

He led Edie to the door and let her go in alone. The invalid reached out both hands to her and drew her down beside him. "Edie, I am ashamed; I promise you never to touch another drop; it was 'awfully mean' of me—as you said—not to promise the other night."

Edie was enjoying a real happy cry. A cheerful spring rain outside, and another in that cosy room, with a rainbow of promise gilding each.

Charlie's Uncle Warren called to enquire about his nephew. "You have improved wonderfully since yesterday."

"There is a reason for it, and I will tell you." In spite of Edie's remonstrance, he told the story.

"It has always been my theory that one of the greatest helps to the temperance cause is simply love. Loveless marriages largely end in intemperance. Generation after generation of loving couples will do much to crush out intemperance in many directions."

Not many weeks after this, cards announced that Mr. and Mrs. Erle were "at home."

The happy bride fluttered through the rooms like a canary taking an airing. "I never can say wise and witty things like Jean Cragie, but I shall try to amuse and interest you, Charlie."

"I am quite satisfied," he said proudly.

She dressed elegantly and talked a vast amount of nonsense. Her husband admired the toilettes and enjoyed the nonsense. People called her a doll, and did not know that through this doll's influence Charlie Erle was a sober man. Edie herself knew it and was satisfied with her mission. Jean Cragie was a frequent and welcome visitor at the sunny home, and each woman helped the other.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"IN THE DAWNING OF THE MORNING."

"Mamma."

"What is it, darling?"

"My feet hurt me so. Don't you see they are swollen?"

"Yes, love. Shall mamma hold you for a little while?"

"You are so tired, now."

"Let me hold you, Annie, and I will sing to you. I am not at all tired. Are you easier now?" Madie asked.

"Yes. Will you please sing some of those pretty Scotch songs?"

"I will sing anything you like." She sang all the pieces that she had heard Annie express a liking for, while she rocked her carefully.

"Now sing 'My Ain Countree.'"

The eyelids closed, then opened, suddenly; "Miss Madie, could you stay with us just a little while longer?"

"Yes, dear, if I can go back to Uncle Joe's long enough to write a note and send to Miss Cragie and the manager so that someone can take my place."

"It will not be very long," and Madie knew her words were true.

"I can't give her up." Mrs. LaSelle, who had been under strong self-control so long, was weeping violently, now that all hope had left her. "If she did not suffer so I could bear it better."

Madie tried to comfort her, but words failed her. It was difficult for her to keep her own tears from falling. Annie had crept into her heart and was one of her dearest friends in that city.

The hours dragged along; the feeble respiration grew fainter; the cough, that had been so hard to hear and bear, had left her now.

They were moving into the soft light of a new day, when

Annie looked out upon the city. "Mamma—lift—me—up—please." Mrs. LaSelle lifted her carefully. "Mamma, I am going away, but you will come after awhile—Irene—Albert—be good to mamma and don't forget Annie—Madie, I—love—you. I—shall—be—with—papa, mamma." The sweet eyes rested on her mother's face. The brown earth had rolled into the clear dawn. "Mamma!"

"My darling!"

"Listen!" The little hands were lifted eagerly. "Papa—I am—coming." And away in the full light of dawn she went; the dawn of a day that would last forever.

"Dear Mrs. LaSelle try to rest, now. Remember, you have others to think of." Madie led her away, and hushed the noisy sobbing of the children.

Sleep laid a hand upon the mother and her little ones, and led them into the forgetfulness of dreamland.

"Let us, who loved her, get her ready," said Mrs. Hale.

"Thank you for not calling her it! If Miss Cragie can go with me, I shall go out into the country and get some bright, spring flowers. I am afraid she cannot leave, however."

"I will stay here to-day," Mrs. Hale promised.

Miss Cragie was not at home. "Probably doing my work," Madie thought, as she went down to the street.

A man, walking slowly along, quickened his footsteps at sight of the familiar figure. A second thought arrested him, and he turned in an opposite direction; but the desire to speak with her was stronger than his strong will, and he rapidly retraced his footsteps. His long strides enabled him to reach her very soon.

"Miss Burton, what can you be in search of that you are in such haste?"

"Mr. McLean, I was going after some spring flowers for Annie, she was so fond of them; she left us this morning. I have just come from Miss Cragie's room, but she was not there; I think very likely she is doing work that

I ought to be doing myself; as I wrote her last night I might not work to-day."

"And doing it gratefully, too, I have no doubt; as she well remembers the cheerful taking of her task a few weeks ago." Another word of praise from this man, who was so chary of them, except to the poor and erring with whom he labored.

"Let me go with you."

"Oh, if you only would; but you are always so busy."

"I can spare a few hours this morning." He hailed a carriage, and they drove out of the smoky, noisy city, into the pure country air.

"When did the little girl die?"

"At sunrise. I was afraid she would have to go out alone in the night, but it was broad day when she went."

The birds were singing in the thicket where they drove up and alighted. Violets, anemones, and crocuses were blooming in profusion; Madie gathered all she could carry in her basket. "She loved them so, dear little Annie!" She sat down on the mossy bank and wept for the friend she had lost. "When I am lonely and grieved I want mamma so much, and she seems farther away than ever at such times."

She had been doing extra work, and depriving herself of needful rest in order that she might be with Annie. Mr. McLean was moved with pity as he noticed the pallor of her face, and how thin she had grown since he last saw her.

"I shall direct the driver to return by another route, and we can take in quite a good deal of this country road."

Madie looked up quickly: "Do you know, I thought you were offended with me when I last saw you, but you couldn't have been, really, or you would not have done this."

"No, I 'couldn't have been, really,'" smiling as he repeated her words.

"I used to be afraid of you, but I never shall be again. I have always liked you," she frankly added, lest the first of her remark might wound him.

"Please to continue your liking," he said earnestly. "You are more to me than any other person, Miss Madeline; remember that." Madie looked away from this new expression of eye and face; but she was glad he had said these words. "He is so alone in the world, poor man, that my friendship seems a great thing to him," she thought, with ready sympathy.

They drove back to the city, each one busily thinking. "If I say anything I will say too much, and it would be both inopportune and selfish to say that which I wish to say, in the midst of all this sadness," was the substance of the man's meditations.

Madie was still thinking of her little friend. "I can't realize it, now that I am away from her," she said as they reached the city. "As long as she was able to sit by the window, Annie watched me out of sight every morning, and I shall miss even that."

"I believe that you have too much heart."

"Can one have too much?"

"Yes, to be really cheerful and happy."

"Do not pity me; just think of poor Mrs. LaSelle! Annie was scarcely twelve years of age; but she has been a companion to her mother for a long time."

"Tell me about your home and home folks?" he said, hoping to draw her thoughts from this grief.

Madie told him of her father, mother, brothers and sisters.

"Thank you! I have become interested in the entire family. Your father's name is Frank, is it not?"

"How did you know?" Madie asked, greatly surprised.

"I think I remember of hearing Mr. Burton speak of him by that name."

"What is mamma's name?"

"Bell. I learned her name through Mrs. Carter."

"You are more observant than I thought. Mamma's name is Christabel, but my sister is named for her, so she is called by the last syllable, and my sister by the first two, to distinguish them. I think that is so much better

than 'big Christabel' and 'little Christabel.' Mamma is the only person whom papa or Aunt Sarah has ever called by an abbreviated name."

Mr. McLean dismissed the carriage when they arrived at Mr. Burton's.

"Will you come in?"

"Yes, for a few minutes," he answered.

Miss Cragie met her in the hall. "I am sorry, my dear; but you will have to go to-night; there is extra work."

"I expected that I should. Have you been very busy, Jean?"

"Quite; but very glad of the opportunity to return a few of the many favors you have granted me."

"We will have dinner served immediately. You must both stay," said Mrs. Burton, who was always hospitable.

"I must go over to Mrs. LaSelle's," Madie said, by way of excusing herself to her friends.

Mrs. Hale greeted her with the news: "Mrs. LaSelle's brother is here."

"I am so very glad for her sake. Here are some flowers for Annie. Will you put some of them around her and fill the vases? I would attend to it, but I shall have to take up my work to-night."

"Of course, I will willingly arrange them. It is too bad that you have to work when you are so weary. She—they I mean—will be thankful for the flowers. I don't know as I needed to change the pronouns; Annie may be aware of this herself."

"We do not know. I wanted to do something for her and for all of them. A friend kindly took me to the country."

Irene and Albert were talking in a subdued way. "Irene, do you know that song Miss Burton sang to us?—

'I shall love to be with Jesus, I shall love him more and more,
And I'll gather water lilies for the angel at the door.'

I wonder if Annie has seen Jesus?"

"Isn't he up there where she has gone?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I guess she must have looked at him the first thing after she saw papa."

Madie smiled through her tears. "Her faith is beautiful."

"Well, I declare!" fretted Mrs. Carter, when she returned. "I think it was very ill-mannered in you to go to the country, and not let us know it."

"Deliver your lecture solely to me, Mrs. Carter. I am responsible for this day's journey."

"Oh, very well, Mr. McLean. If you could spare the time I ought not to object. Madie should have told us of her intentions."

"I did tell Aunt Anna, but you were not here."

The manager spoke very kindly to Madie that night.

"You look tired, Miss Burton."

"I have been with a sick friend."

"You will need to rest before long. I shall try to give you a brief furlough."

"I do not think I had better stop until late in the summer."

"We shall see about that after a while. In the meantime try not to get sick."

The next morning a fresh basketful of flowers was brought to Madie, with a note:

"DEAR FRIEND:

I brought these fresh flowers from the country this morning, and send them to you for Annie. Will call in a few days.

Respectfully yours, D. M. McLEAN."

"How very kind of him," she exclaimed, as she bent over the sweet blossoms.

Annie's pillow was strewn with the dainty wild flowers.

In the bright spring afternoon they gathered around her, those whom she loved and who had loved her; while the choirs were practicing their chants and anthems; and the Easter lilies strewed the altars of the churches; and "Christ is risen" shown from the walls. When the mother and children had taken their last look, the minis-

ter reverently and softly settled the lid back in its place. The bustling undertaker came in to attend *cheerfully* to his business, but the casket was closed. Madie was grateful to the pastor, who did this because he had known and loved Annie—as he loved all children—with a great, tender affection. They laid the little girl away in the beautiful cemetery and went back to the home that seemed so empty without her.

Madie sat that night, with the others in conversation around her, and sent her thoughts away out *toward* the infinite. Our finite minds can only reach in that direction; they cannot get in.

“Mr. McLean was there to-day, and he seemed quite sympathetic,” she heard her uncle saying.

“When the seeming becomes a reality, he will be quite a man. I like him better than I did,” said Miss Cragie.

“Listen!” Mrs. Burton opened a window as she spoke. The band was serenading one of the grand women of the age, who was stopping at the Mayor’s residence.

The sweet sounds floated away through the city, above the rattle and din. “Home, Sweet Home” throbbed through the sweet night air. The curtains were drawn back from many windows; the light went out, and the music went in.

“My best guardian spirit hovers over me when I hear music like this,” said Mr. Burton.

They played the old pieces that this woman so dearly loved. She had resigned home life and comforts, because she “felt the hand of God laid heavily upon her,” to go out into the world and help her brothers and sisters.

“I wonder if the child angel, new to that other world, knows that sweet music is filling the air around her earthly home? Is she so filled with joy and rapture that she forgets earthly friends and joins the angelic choir, without a thought or memory of this lower world, or is it as if she had never been before?”

“There Madie, lassie,” said Uncle Joe tenderly, “you are ‘driven to the wall’ and must stop within the limits of human ken.”

"In reply to the last clause, Madie; it is my firm belief that heaven would not be heaven if we did not know of a worse place," said Jean.

Mrs. LaSelle's unnatural calm was broken by the first strains of "The Sweet By and By." and she shed the first tears she had shed since Annie died.

Her brother took her and Albert and Irene back with him to his own home, and Madie was more lonely than ever.

"Visit Annie's grave when you can, will you not?" was Mrs. LaSelle's last request.

"Yes, whenever I can."

Thus these women, who had been so closely drawn together, separated.

CHAPTER XXX.

REVELATIONS.

Madie had not worn her chain and locket since receiving her watch. One Saturday evening, when her work for the week was completed, and she was idling in her room, she thought of it, and, taking it from the little box that held her few jewels, fastened it around her neck. She touched the spring and looked curiously, as she had often done, at the two faces; after the first glance, she seemed interested in only one portrait.

"There! I have found, after so long a time, the reason of the familiarity of Mr. McLean's countenance; he resembles this man; I wish he would come; I should like to let him see his 'double.'"

As if in answer to her wish, her Aunt Anna called her below; she went into the library as directed; her face was flushed and her eyes filled with a new light.

Mr. McLean was waiting for her, and held out his hands as eagerly as Madie herself would have done.

"Miss Burton, I have come to tell you that I love you. Will you be my wife?"

Grandly and simply he stood before her and said those few words.

"I love you, Mr. McLean, but I cannot be your wife."

"Will you tell me why?"

"I am the oldest of my father's family, and I am determined to help my brothers, and, in fact, all my people, if they need it." She told him of the game which she had adopted as her emblem of work.

"Let me help you."

"No; if the work must be done, Christa and I must do it. I have saved something; perhaps it will be all that they will need."

Mr. McLean was pleading so earnestly the first love of his life, that it was hard for her to say no.

"I am a middle-aged man, but I will wait patiently, if, at the last, you can come to me willingly; though I need you now and all the time."

"If my people are getting along comfortably, I will come, but I cannot lay too heavy a burden on Christa. I am going home next month, and then I will know what is best for me to do."

He took her in his arms and kissed her, reverently. "You will come back to me, I think. If I grow weary of waiting, can I come to you? I have written to your father and mother and have received an answer. They say they 'have no worldly wish for you save for your own happiness.' "

"Did they write that? It sounds just like them. If I can I will write for you to come."

"Good night." He noticed the locket at her throat.

"Where did you get that, Miss Madeline?"

"A rebel prisoner gave it me years ago. One of the faces inside is his, the other resembles you." She opened the locket and handed it to him, and was amazed to see him take its counterpart from his own pocket.

"My brother and myself, and here is a lock of our mother's hair behind his picture."

"How strange it all is. I have wondered whom you resembled ever since I first saw you. I made the discovery to-night, just before you came, and was wishing for you to come that I might show you the portrait, but I never dreamed that you were the original. I did not remember your brother's name. He left a letter for me, but it was not completed. He died a few days after I last saw him. I went back to wish him Merry Christmas, and the kindness touched him."

"We were not of the same name. He was the son of my mother's second husband. So you were kind to Max, but whom have you known and not been kind to? Take the locket, Madie, for my sake as well as his. We have been waiting for each other for years!" These words were

said in a tone that no one would have recognized as the city missionary's.

"Wait a little longer," said Madie.

Holding her little hands tightly he answered: "I will, and try to be patient. Even to know you love me, makes me happier than I ever thought to be on earth."

John Crowan and his wife were driving to Clayton, with their democrat wagon loaded with butter, eggs and spring chickens. "I want to give a couple of the best chickens to Mrs. Burton. We'll stop a little while and hear about Madie. I haven't written to her as I ought to have done. I can get time for most everything else but to write letters; they are awful easy things to let slip along. We count it awful impolite not to answer a question that either a friend or enemy asks, but let the best friend we've got go off somewhere and write a letter asking a lot of questions, and ten to one he never hears from the most of us. 'Speak when you're spoken to' don't hold a bit good in letter-writing. But there ain't deaf and dumb enough about me to like to substitute my hands for my tongue."

"You know just how to handle your tongue, Lizy."

"There, John, don't go to praising me up!"

"We might give a pair of chickens to one of the editors."

"No we mightn't, John. When I give, I give right out. I don't go to trading for a puff in a paper."

They drove to Mr. Burton's first. "Come in! Mamma wants you," called Christa.

Mrs. Crowan sprang from the wagon, pushing back the hair pins as she walked up to the house.

"Is your ma sick?"

"No," said Christa, laughing.

Someone sprang from the parlor and caught her in a quick embrace.

"For the land sakes, Madie! When did you come?"

"Yesterday. Took them all by surprise."

"How peaked you do look. Clear tired out, ain't you?"

"I was tired; but I am rested already. My employer

urged me to come, and when I go back I shall go right into the editorial rooms. My work will be there, and it will be much easier."

"She has been visiting the poor, and taking care of the sick, and working, and singing for everyone that has asked her, until she is worn down completely."

"Christa is bound to give me credit for all I do. I wanted to prove that a woman could do public work and attend to home duties; so I have read and helped my aunts and uncle, and done a few other things."

"I was so interested in you, Madie, that I really forgot what I come for. Mrs. Burton, I brought you in some spring chickens. I'll have John kill 'em. I know how opposed you are to doing such work, by my own feelings. It does seem that everything raised on a farm is just to fat and kill."

"We are all very thankful for your thoughtful kindness. From a child I have had my heart wrung, by the slaughter of animals on a farm. It is one death after another, and they lead such a happy life, roaming over the prairie. Frank hates to kill even a chicken. I have often heard him say that he could go into the farm-yard and the poultry would gather all about him; but if he went with the intention of catching one to kill, they seemed to know his intentions, and would keep out of his way."

"I told John that I wished we were rich enough, and had a farm big enough, to let them live out their natural days."

Mrs. Crowan spent the day with her friends. Madie described the principal places of interest that she had seen; told of the notables she had heard, and said, as she finished: "Everyone helped me to grow a little. I sometimes wondered whether I wrote the articles, or whether it was not the conversation of others shining through them. The best I could do for you, or for the readers of those papers, was to give you the chaff, instead of the rich grain from their fields of thought."

Mr. Crowan was delighted to see Madie. "Lizy, don't it seem good to see her around home?"

"I should think it did! You must be sure and come and see us."

"Never fear but that you will see Leon and I many times during my month's vacation."

"What makes you keep looking around the house, Madie?" Christa enquired, when they were again alone.

"Because I haven't done being glad to see every room and every bit of furniture here." Josie followed closely after her "own Madie," and praised her continually. They were getting along nicely, financially. Christa was busy with her sketching during the summer vacation.

Madie discussed the future with her parents and sister. "I want to know the opinion of each one of you. You have read his letter; it is like himself, honest and earnest."

Christa could not bear the idea of "losing Madie entirely," as she said. "I don't believe he is half good enough for you. I thought we were always going to live together."

"So we will, dear, if you all think it best."

"I don't want you to stay with us if you would be any happier with him, but I know I shall not like him. I never thought you would leave us," reproachfully.

"Christabel, do not be selfish; Madeline has already done much for the family. We ought to be able to take care of ourselves and let her work for herself in the future. His letter was a manly avowal, and if Madeline wishes to go to a home of her own, it is not for us to object," said Mr. Burton.

"Now, mamma," said Madie, "what have you to say?" She was sitting in a low chair beside Mrs. Burton.

"If my darling loves him and he returns the love, if each will do better work because of the other, I shall not say no, although, like Christa, I hate to give you up." She laid her hand softly on the brown hair, where the sunlight was sleeping.

"If you need me, mamma, I will stay, for I resolved years ago to do that."

"I shall not ask you to continue your resolution."

"He is a grand man. I promised to write for him, if he were to come."

Christa was not at all pleased with this announcement, but made no further objection.

The next morning Madie sent a brief note:

"DEAR FRIEND:

I have talked with my parents and Christa, and I guess you had better come. MADIE BURTON."

Mr. McLean smiled when he read the few words that sounded so much like a telegram.

He hurriedly made arrangements to leave his flock for a season, and in a few days alighted from the train at Clayton. He was met by Mr. Burton, who was favorably impressed. From the first the two men were drawn together.

"Madie is in here," said her father, opening the parlor door and standing back for Mr. McLean to enter alone.

When Madie heard him coming her first impulse had been to run away and hide. "Madie, I have come." All her old fear of him came back again.

"Madeline, are you sorry that I have come to you?"

She went toward him then. "No;—I wished you to come or I should not have written."

"You will be my wife?" he asked, bending down and whispering low to the girl whose head just reached his shoulder.

"Yes "

"Madeline, look up!"

The sweet eyes looked at him trustingly. He bowed his head. "Let us thank God!" The tenderest, most loving prayer he had ever made sealed their betrothal.

"Do you think you will be satisfied with me always?" she asked humbly.

"I think I shall," he answered, with a proud smile.

"And you with me?" he asked.

"I *know* I shall," with a sudden uplifting of her head; a motion peculiar to herself, and which had once called

from Benjie the remark: "Madie makes gestures with her chin?"

The birds outside sang their love notes and the pansies in the garden were "shaking with quiet laughter." "I want you to see mamma," said Madie, a half hour later. She left the room and soon returned with Mrs. Burton.

"Mamma, this is Mr. McLean."

"If Madeline continues to resemble her mother, I shall never regret this morning," he thought, as, with perfect ease and frankness, she welcomed him to their home. He remembered a sentence he had read a few days before. "Politeness is to do and say the kindest things in the kindest manner." "If this definition is correct; this woman is one of the most truly polite persons I have ever met."

Christabel, round-faced and cheery, with a certain dignity that was as natural as her smile, shook hands with him and took her place at the table. Bert and Benjie looked a little uncomfortable. "Isn't a bit like Ned, Phil and Ralph. I don't believe he would play with us half as quick as Robert Peyton, and *he* is real pokey!" Benjie's musings were evidently not complimentary to the stranger.

When Josie awoke from her nap, she wanted Madie to come to her as usual, but Madie was entertaining her guest. "I want her my own self. Who is that man that keeps her away from me?" She trudged into the room where they were all sitting.

"Come here, little girl," said Mr. McLean. She shook her curls over her face. "Come, I should like to make your acquaintance." One step sidewise, and another shake of the curls. "What is your name?" adopting the almost universal preamble to a conversation with a child; as the weather topic is with grown people.

"Josie Burton; I'm Madie's sister."

"Do you like Madie?"

"I love my Madie," nodding her head emphatically, and looking a trifle disgustedly at him for putting the question.

"I think we will agree there, so come to me."

"I'm tired and can't walk so far."

"Well, I will come more than half way." He picked her up and sat her on his knee.

"Walph and Ned laughs and tells nice stories to me. I love Walph, and mamma loves Walph, and so does my Madie." Mr. McLean felt a very unclerical feeling in his heart for "Walph." "Walph writes lots of pwetty things to me."

Josie could talk as plainly as anyone, but Christa, Bert and Benjie liked to hear the baby pronunciation, and adopted her manner of speech. "We want to keep her a baby as long as we can," said Christa.

Mr. McLean was not interested in Josie's conversation, so she slipped down and went to Madie. "I didn't idea that he'd be such poor company! Tell me about those children, Madie." So Madie told her the story. "And 'he had a great big top;' tell it all, Madie." When anyone told a story to Josie, that was not apt to be the end of it; it had to be repeated many times, and after the first narration she would not allow one sentence to be omitted, doing the prompting herself.

Mr. McLean had not for years been an inmate of a real home. "How affectionate they all are. I think that they sometimes lay too great stress on little things," he mused.

Madie and Christabel planned together and consulted with their parents as usual.

Both Mrs. Burton and Madie wished to have the wedding postponed for a year, and Mr. McLean had yielded to their wishes. "You must go to the art school next year, Christa. I will put a stout girl in the kitchen to help mamma," said Madie decidedly.

Christa's eyes shone at the prospect of having her dreams realized. "I shall not be gone but six months this time," the older sister continued; "then I shall come back home and stay until"—— She stopped, and no one was able or willing to complete the sentence for her.

They all said: "When—after—before—until," but they could not mention, even among themselves, the event that

was to "take Madie away from them for always," as Christa said.

Bert and Benjie took their sister into all their boyish plans and confidences. Serene and happy in her home life, Madie danced and sang about the house, only becoming sober when she was in her lover's company.

Aggie and Robert Peyton were frequent visitors. Christa silently compared the two men, placing Robert in the higher place. Mr. McLean did not approve of Aggie's gay spirits, and Aggie was not at all impressed with his superiority.

The one who least approved the engagement was Mrs. Crowan. "Madie going to marry that man? Dear! dear! he is about as companionable as a refrigerator. He'll just take all the youthful spirits away from her. It's a downright pity that they ever met. He was born good, I suppose, but I like to see such a man lift himself a little bit out of the grooves. In goodness as in everything else, we are apt to appreciate what we have to work for. I have to pull myself up notch by notch, and when I get to a level place where I can travel along real fast, I enjoy it all the better. Everyone ought to be obliged to exert every muscle mentally, morally, and physically, so this climbing is real nice once in a while. I'd rather be good on the hill-top than in the valley; you get a better, broader view of God and His world when you are up there."

Christa agreed with Mrs. Crowan, but she did not express herself to anyone. The fear of hurting Madie's feelings was stronger than her repugnance to Mr. McLean's society. Sometimes, when listening to his descriptions of places he had seen, or conversation on topics interesting to all, she was obliged to acknowledge that he was a wonderful man. "He really loves my little sister; though, for that matter, I do not see how anyone could help loving her; and she is satisfied with him." But the concluding thought of Christa and her mother was always this: "I hope they will be happy."

Uncle Joe fumed and fretted when he heard the news;

Aunt Anna said nothing; Aunt Sarah was perfectly satisfied with Madie for the first time in her life.

Mrs. Grenall and Harry Lee made Sada a visit. The happy wife, proud of her home and husband, was pleased to exhibit both to her relatives. They talked of Madie's prospects.

"If she is only as happy as I am, she is not to be pitied at all," said Sada.

"He is much older than she, and I am afraid he is not the one she ought to marry," said her aunt.

"I am sure Ralph will feel badly. He has worked for her so long." Ned's voice was not quite as clear as usual when he said these words.

Ralph had received a letter from Madie, stating that she was going to spend several weeks at home. "I shall see her then, and tell her the story—so old to the world—yet so new to us." With a light heart he went about his duties.

Commencement was over at last, and he began making preparations for his trip. "She will look at me with those great, trusting eyes, and she must answer yes; I cannot walk into the Future without her by my side." His pleasant meditations were interrupted by the entrance of Harry Lee.

"Ned told me where to find you, so I came over. I didn't want to wait until morning."

"I am glad you didn't, Harry. How were all the folks that I know, when you left them?"

Important in the knowledge that he had some news to tell, Harry told all he knew of their mutual friends. "Madie Burton is called one of the best reporters in the city. Folks praised her lots, but she used to run in and play with me, and talk about Bert and Benjie, and wasn't a bit proud. Mrs. Lawrence said she ought to marry well, but I guess she isn't going to so very. She's going to marry a minister. I don't know what breed he is; he's awful tall and sober."

Ralph was about to light the study lamp, but threw the

match back into the box. "Who told you that Madie was going to marry this man?"

"She wrote to Miss Cragie and Sada. I know 'cause I heard them tell it, but I forgot, Ned said for you to come over to-night."

"Tell him that he will have to excuse me. I have some work to finish."

Harry went away, but the work was not done for some time. If one has worked for years with a purpose in view, and, when it is near achievement, finds that he has spent all these years in dreaming dreams that can never be realized, he is apt to turn from the future as if he could not meet it. So Ralph, feeling the disappointing, failure-clogged Past behind him, and judging from it what the Future might be, stood in the Present, irresolute.

"It was a castle in Spain, but its fall has caused a heart bruise. I don't see how it can be, Madie! You have had a home in my heart so long that it is hard to turn you away; I never have felt alone in the world since I knew you, but it is so solitary now." He paced back and forth through the room.

Ned came in; "Why don't you come down to the house, Ralph?"

"I can't leave to-night, Ned! I have concluded to go with my teachers to the Pacific Coast. We start Monday, so I must go to packing and 'setting my house in order' immediately. I think the change will be good for me." He struggled to speak in an off-hand manner, but Ned both felt and heard the pain in his voice.

In the old boyish way he threw his arm across his friend's shoulder.

"Maybe it will be better for you to go. I am not pleased with the news myself."

Nothing further was said. Ralph was grateful to Ned for this half expressed sympathy, and more grateful for the silence that followed. He spent the remainder of the summer in California. Among the many letters of congratulation that Madie received, the one that she felt most deeply was the note sent from the Golden State:

“DEAR LITTLE FRIEND:

I have heard of your prosperous work, and am proud that you have been so long a friend of mine. I predicted years ago that you would become one of the successful workers.

I have heard, too, that you are happy in the love of a good, true man. You have my good wishes for always.

I am rambling amid the wonders of our *outermost* West, and presume I shall not hear from you until I get back to my work. I did not want you to miss my congratulations from among your other friends, so have written to-night. God bless you, Madie! RALPH.”

“It is such a sad letter, mamma.”

“Yes, Christa; but do not speak of it to Madie. I think Ralph is disappointed at present.”

Mr. McLean did not like this letter at all. He read in the spacing between the lines some of the pain and loss that the writer had tried to disguise, and saw more than a brotherly feeling there.

“Why do you correspond with him, Madeline?”

“Because I have written to him ever since I was a little girl. And we enjoy hearing from each other.”

He did not consider this a satisfactory reason.

“To whom are you writing?” he enquired a few hours later.

“To Sada and Ned, and a note to Ralph, thanking him for his good wishes. I cannot send it to him, as I do not know where to address him; but will put it in their letter, and he will get it as soon as he returns. I thought perhaps Ned might know where to forward it to him.”

“Madeline, I do not think it right for a promised wife to continue a correspondence with other gentlemen.”

“But it is different with Ralph—” she began.

“He is a young man and you are a young woman. You can do as you like, of course; but I do not sanction it.”

Madie felt his disapproval for the remainder of the afternoon. At dusk she joined him on the piazza.

“Dear!” slipping her hand in his, “I will do as you wish, and shall not write to Ralph again.”

"But you may regret this promise."

"I have you, Mr. McLean, and I ought to be satisfied."

He *half* appreciated her sacrifice; so he was this fractional part better than the most of those who boast of their masterful dispositions.

On the following Monday Mr. McLean returned to his work, and Madie spent the remainder of her vacation alone with her own family. Aggie and Robert came more often, now that the dignified guest was gone.

"Mamma," said Madie, as she folded the last dress and laid it in Christa's trunk, for they were going to start together. "If anything should happen to any of you at home, send for me. Remember, I only give up a position, and Christa will have to relinquish a plan."

"I shall send for my eldest daughter if I need her." It was very hard for Mrs. Burton to let both her daughters go so far from home, but she kept back her tears until she was alone.

The sisters stopped, as Madie had done the year before, at the beautiful capital city, and as before, Phil was there to meet them. Aunt Prue, with the smile that never grows old, took both girls to her heart. While Uncle Ben and Carrie made the sisters' joyous anticipation of this visit a blessed reality.

"I am going to have you trail your garments through the halls of the Past," said Phil. "We will visit 'every loved spot that our infancy knew.'"

So another trip was made to the old farm. "I shall come back and sketch some of these familiar nooks when I am competent to do it well. The day has been so filled with memories that I have lived two days in one—a day of reality and a day of dreaming. Papa and mamma must come back next year. We must manage somehow."

At this last sentence Phil tossed his hat and cried: "Hurrah, Christa! that familiar sentence makes me a child again. I have been feeling so old, and so young, and so nohow lately, but now I am a boy."

"I think you are always that," said Carrie.

Madie was very glad to learn that Phil was going to the city with her, and would stop for a time at their uncle's. He was going in partnership with an older physician. "It will be grand to have you near," she said, and Phil was almost as jubilant as herself.

They were all glad to see her back again. The editor was quite fatherly in his kindly greeting. Miss Cragie was enthusiastic in her reception. She visited them and examined Christa's work. "You are a genius! So many people paint, but there are very few artists. You have excelled my teaching already," she said frankly.

Phil was immediately interested in Miss Cragie, and they soon became fast friends.

Mrs. Carter was constantly giving Madie advice in regard to the new position she was soon to occupy. Her niece had gained new interest in her eyes.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TRAGEDY: ON THE STAGE AND OFF.

Mr. McLean called on Madie immediately. "I am more glad than I can tell you, Madeline, to know that you are again in the city."

"Are you? Your words make me quite content to be here. I really feel as if I were well acquainted with you to-day. There have been times when I would think for a little while that I knew you, but the next time we met, it would seem as if we were almost strangers."

"I hope you will never have that feeling again."

"I do not believe that I shall."

Phil, in another room, was saying: "I wonder if I will be presented to-night? Madie ought to be considerate enough to call me in. I confess to a really feminine curiosity in regard to him."

"I do not think that quality is confined to either sex. If you men had as little to occupy your time and attention as most women have, you would be more curious and disagreeable than they are," said Christa, always ready to uphold her own sex. Phil did not reply, as Madie came for himself and Christa.

It was not a real comfortable party. After Christa had spoken to her brother-in-law elect, and Phil had been introduced, an awkward silence fell upon the group. Mr. McLean was not a man to put everyone at ease in his company.

"Dear me," thought Phil, "what sort of weather have we been having lately? I'd discuss that question, but if I should be wrong, he, in his comfortable *rightness*, would be so surprised. I've always ridiculed people who prefaced all their remarks with 'a lovely day, isn't it?' but I wish we had one such here, now. Weather is something

we always have, so I shall notice and talk about it hereafter."

"You are going to reside in the city, Miss Burton tells me," Mr. McLean finally said to Phil.

"Yes, for a time at least; if I am successful I shall remain here."

"And you are going to continue your art study in Boston, Miss Christa? If you enjoy paintings, perhaps you would be interested in some of those in my possession. I invited Madeline down last year, but she could not come. I think I will repeat the invitation, and extend it to all."

"We will accept, I am sure," said Madie, who was relieved to have the stillness broken.

"We will, of course," said Christa.

"I think we can manage." Mr. McLean smiled as he recognized Christa's pet phrase, spoken soberly by Phil.

When the interview was ended, Phil looked at Christa with an amused twinkle in his eye. "Was he ever a baby?"

"Yes, and a very good one," said Christa, who was loyal to Madie; but the dimples would show in spite of her determined effort. "He gave Bert and Benjie lessons in science while he was with us. He told them of light and sound, and the velocity of each; and they were quite interested; then he said: 'It takes eight minutes for light to travel from the sun to the earth, and years for it to reach us from some of the fixed stars.' Benjie took it all quietly, but Bert said: 'Stop a minute, you make my head ache; I wish you hadn't told me; the stars will seem so far away now, and I like to have them seem near at night when I am looking at them.' Mr. McLean stopped talking of stars, and told them of sound waves. Bert told me afterward that he would rather read novels than to study about such improbable things as that."

Phil laughed heartily. "The sciences, even us who profess to understand them, are stranger than any fiction."

"Yes; because we have not the preface and finis, we can only read the intermediate chapters, the 'is now' in

this world; 'as it was in the beginning,' and the 'ever shall be,' belongs to the 'world without end,' " said Madie, who had come into the room as Phil was speaking.

"Tell that to your brothers sometime when they are old enough to understand," said Phil.

Madie cheerfully took up the round of visits that she had given up for Annie's sake. Christa went with her when she made her first calls. "Right glad to see you back again," was the substance of the welcoming address of each. "And is this your sister? You ain't alike in looks, that's sure," was what usually followed.

The landlord was at one house when they entered. On seeing the neatly dressed girls, he removed his hat. "Mrs. McCarthy is a real lady, and I have no more respect for that man because he took off his hat when we entered, and kept it on while talking to her," said Madie.

Together with Miss Cragie, Phil, and Mr. McLean, they visited Annie's grave, and laid upon it their offering of fall flowers. They visited Mr. McLean, and Christa was delighted with the rare works of art.

It was at the mission school that she first became interested with her prospective relative. To see him among his people, and notice the grave earnestness of purpose with which he worked, and the simple straightforwardness of speech when he addressed them, was amply sufficient to change her opinion of him. "He is far beyond me. I have known this all the time, but here he does not make me feel that *he* feels the difference, as he did last summer."

When they returned to Mr. Burton's, she went to speak to him in the library. "I have something to say to Mr. McLean, Madie. I will tell you what it is afterward; but I would like to be alone with him when I say it."

"Then go down now, before I and the others join you."

"I have changed my mind in regard to him, and want to tell him of it."

"I mistrusted as much," said Madie. "But you must hurry or Aunt Sarah will be there."

"Mr. McLean, I came to tell you that I have misjudged you, and did not like you at all at first; I tried to for Madie's sake, but now, that I know you do your work through faith, and not as a profession, I shall like you for yourself."

He was at first disposed to reject the proffered hand, but the innate truth of his nature helped him to understand the frankness of hers; and he and Christa were in friendly conversation when Madie came down. "I must go to work to-morrow, and Christa will be left to herself," she said, as he was leaving.

"I will try and make the remainder of her stay as pleasant as possible."

"I know you will," said Madie; "and I shall not feel that she is lonely."

Mrs. Lawrence again opened her house. Mr. McLean went, as he considered it in the light of a duty to Madie and her relatives.

Madie danced once with Phil. "Mr. McLean does not believe in dancing, so I shall refuse all invitations hereafter. You may take me to Aunt Anna."

Phil's thoughts of the clergyman were not of the most flattering sort.

"Two very superior girls," said Mr. Warren when he had renewed his former acquaintance with Madie, and had enjoyed a half hour's talk with Christa.

"I just love them both," exclaimed Edie Erle, to whom the remark was made. "Don't you, Mrs. Howe?"

"I love everyone," was the smiling answer.

"I hardly think you do," said Jean Cragie.

"Why not, my dear?"

"Because that is all God, with his mighty heart, is able to do."

Mrs. Howe had no answer ready, and Jean did not wait for one, as Phil came to take her to the supper-room.

Christa was eager to begin her work. "I wish you were going with me, Madie."

"I wish I were; but as you well know, palette and brush are useless articles in my hands. Write often."

"I will."

Christa's instructors praised the sketches she exhibited, and were surprised at her unflagging zeal. She was doing congenial work, and in consequence was doing it well. I believe that half the people whom we call indolent would not deserve the name if they had begun in a line of work suited to their taste and talent. Failures are made every day by taking up work that we are not fitted for. Some find their niche easily, and others play "puss wants a corner" during all their allotted years. "Pull-a-way" is a grand play in the game of life, if the attendant circumstances are just right; but it cannot be played well upon a side hill, when the "catcher" is neither willing nor fleet, and the "sides" do not understand the game well enough to "go" when he calls.

Madie was working earnestly and faithfully. "I want to prove to Mr. McLean that I can help him in many ways."

"I hope you will not attend parties often," he had said to her the next time they met, after the evening at Mrs. Lawrence's.

"I shall not, unless they are at my uncle's or cousin's, or Mrs. Grenall's," she answered almost sadly. A woman dislikes being treated as a naughty child, though she be ever so childish!

"I am not a child, and he shall not treat me like one," she said to herself.

The editor watched her, as she sat at her desk, and said to his assistant: "She writes nicely and easily. I hope we can keep her."

"I am afraid we cannot. She works like one with a purpose."

The senior journalist went to Madie, who was working with so much resolution. "Miss Burton, you will soon understand all the 'ins and outs' of journalism."

"Do you think so?" pleased with the remark from the man who stood so high in that profession. Then another

thought came: "It seems too bad for me to lay down my Torch when it is just beginning to burn brightly; it has only been smouldering for years; but I can use my one talent to help him and his people; and if he is content, I shall be satisfied."

Phil was already hard at work; his partner was soon assured of his skill, and so were the people who employed him. Madie was delighted to hear the words of praise which he received. Miss Cragie listened and smiled as if she, too, were interested.

One evening the three were together, talking of the old days and friends, and especially of Aggie Peyton. Jean was recalling some of her witty sayings, and Phil was intently listening.

"Did she like McLean?" he asked.

"Not at all, I am afraid," said Madie, looking annoyed.

"That was a very tactless question," he said in a low voice, "and I beg your pardon."

"There is no need," she answered.

Jean continued her pleasant reminiscences. Phil laughed as one of Aggie's odd fancies was repeated. "She used to be a regular little tornado when fairly aroused."

"She is very nice," said Madie. "I will not hear my friends spoken of lightly, even in jest. Aggie would do anything for me."

"I admire you for that. People speak harshly to me, and I often do not reply at all, but let them say one word in disparagement of a friend of mine and I wax eloquent in her defense."

Phil smiled at the speaker. "You and Aggie are alike."

"Yes, I fancy I can see the similarity myself."

"Aggie writes such cute letters. I always feel refreshed after reading one of them."

"I think I shall send a message in the next letter you send to her." Phil did not quite like the perfect unconcern with which Miss Cragie listened to his remark.

"Aggie always laughs at sentiment and says, 'she does not believe it possible for her to love anyone, tragically

and *heroically*," said Madie, laughing at the recollection of her friend's words.

"She will make a cheerful, pleasant companion for someone," said Jean.

"Is she domestic in her tastes?"

"Yes, Phil, but her conversation will be as nice as her cake, and her love for the beautiful will exhibit itself in both parlor and kitchen."

"She is a good deal like a rag carpet; kind o' full of streaks."

"A rag carpet is a very sensible article in an every-day room. Of course for one that was to be shut up you might get a finer article."

Phil felt that there was something underlying Miss Cragie's words, and put back a little home picture that his fancy had been sketching since he came to that city.

Madie tried in many ways to help Mr. McLean in his mission work, and received many words of commendation from him in return.

"He does appreciate her after all, and I shall not fear for her, as I have done. I felt almost as if she were dead or going to die very soon, when I heard of the engagement," said Miss Cragie, when the Christmas festivities were over.

"I do not feel quite reconciled yet," said Mr. Burton, to whom the remark had been made.

Mr. McLean was going to Boston to meet a friend, who was coming from Bonnie Scotland to visit the American coast cities. He went to Madie, when he had fully determined to go.

"I am anxious to see my friend with whom I spent so much of my boyhood, and I wish to visit some of the people who are doing the same work in those seaboard cities that I am doing here. I shall be gone several weeks."

"You will go and see Christa, Mr. McLean, and tell me how she looks and what she is doing."

"I will, gladly." Turning to her, with a sudden impulse, he said: "Madeline, I wish you to call me Douglas."

She seldom made any attempt at returning his caresses, but to-night she passed her hand lightly over his dark hair, where the years had already begun to tell their story. "Douglas, I am glad I can call you by a name that you do not hear from any but your own. Please come back as soon as you can. I shall miss you every hour, Douglas."

"I will as soon as I can, my little helper. You will go to the chapel and write me of *our* work."

"Yes, Douglas, 'thy people shall be my people.' "

It struck him with a pathetic sound, this frequent repetition of his Christian name, when he had but just given her permission to call him by it. "I did not know that my name would sound so sweetly from your lips, or I would have made this request before. I have missed that much pleasure all these months." With a sweet, lingering "good by" he turned away. Before he had reached the door, Madie called: "Douglas, come back! One of us will die, or something will happen. I know it, Douglas."

He laughed at her fears, and tried to comfort her.

"I do not want to remember you in tears"

She raised her head suddenly. "Go quickly, then, Douglas!"

So he left the house. This man who was destined to miss so much of love and happiness in this world. Madie received more loving, tender letters than he had ever written her, and was quite happy.

It was a very hard winter upon the poor. Mrs. Grenall was out with her carriage or sleigh daily. "Why not get up a benefit; amateur theatricals would take splendidly," suggested one and another.

"The very thing, but who can we get to take the leading roles?"

"You are intimate with Mrs. Lawrence's cousin. She is a beautiful reader and singer, and the varied expression of her face will completely captivate the audience. She has won her way into some of our best families, and is so well connected, besides."

Mrs. Grenall made known her wishes to Madie, immediately. "We are so in need of the money, dear. I know you will not refuse."

Madie hesitated. She knew Douglas was opposed to the stage. "Can't you find some other one?"

"I am afraid not."

"This is different; I know all the people who will take part, and it is to help those whom he almost left in my charge. It will only be carrying on his work. I do not believe he will seriously object to these theatricals. I will write and ask him," she thought rapidly, while Mrs. Grenall was waiting for her answer. "Could you wait a few days before I decide?"

"I suppose we shall have to, if you cannot decide before. But we need the money now. It will take some time after you begin before we can put it upon the stage."

"Very well, I will do what I can; but you must ask my cousin Phil to take the leading gentleman's role."

Phil positively refused at first, but when urged by both Miss Cragie and Madie, he consented to take the part assigned him. The rehearsals were pushed rapidly. Madie wrote of what she was doing, but Mr. McLean had left Boston and the letter never reached him.

The elite of the city were out to see the amateurs in this grand benefit. "Miss Cragie's acting," they said, "was superb," and "Little Mrs. Erle was childish sweet," but the superlatives that Madie received were like presents at a fashionable wedding—"too numerous to mention." She had lost her own identity in the part she was taking, and was a real woman with pain and sorrow and outraged feeling surging up from her heart. She was called before the curtain after each act, and came out without a particle of affectation or conscious pride, and quietly bowed her thanks for the appreciation.

Several letters asking for a repetition of the performance were sent behind the curtain. "We will let it run for three nights, if our 'company' is willing," said Mrs. Grenall.

The "company" agreed to the proposition, and the play continued to draw a crowded house, each night being an improvement on the one before.

"You are improving, Madie, and I thought, the first night, there was no room for improvement," said Phil.

"Why shouldn't I improve? I am getting better acquainted with myself, my part, and my audience, and bringing them all nearer together."

The play was nearly finished on that last night. Madie was pleading with Phil, her lover, to believe in her. She turned away, and among the sea of faces saw only one stern and troubled. "I knew it would come. Oh, Douglas!" she sobbed, when the curtain dropped.

"More than a thousand dollars," said Mrs. Grenall, coming behind the curtain.

"That will help a great deal," said Madie.

"Miss Burton, you are sick!"

"No, only tired."

Phil wrapped her cloak around her and took her to the carriage. "You are completely exhausted. When will you learn to take care of yourself as well as other people?"

"Don't scold. I can't bear it to-night."

"No; it would be wrong for a man of my profession to scold a patient into a fever," he said lightly.

The next day in the office and the next evening at home, Madie looked for Mr. McLean. "I was not mistaken. He is in the city. That was his face I saw."

Before going home she went to see Mrs. McCarthy. In the far corner of the room, bending over the crippled boy, she saw the man who had been all in all to her for more than a year. Mrs. McCarthy was profuse in her thanks for the basket of delicacies.

"Shure and ye're afther knowing the pracher?"

"Yes," said Madie, greatly embarrassed.

"Misther McLean, do yez moind Miss Burton?"

"I remember Miss Burton," bowing coldly.

"I think we'll all remember her the longest day we're livin'," laughed the happy-tempered Irish woman.

Madie left, heavy-hearted and confused; Mr. McLean

following. "I see you are back. I hope you have found that your people have been cared for."

"Yes, and I am grateful. But the theatrical performance met with my entire disapproval."

"Why did you not write, then?"

"Because I had no knowledge of the enterprise until I returned."

"I wrote you when it was first spoken of. Will you come in for a moment?"

"Yes." He followed her to the library where he had first told her that he loved her, and where he had said good by only six weeks before.

"The poor people were needy and they could not wait. I wrote, but received no answer. I promised to do what I could when you went away. I cannot see that I did very wrong."

"I should not like to have it said of my wife that she danced and was an actress."

"I am not an actress. If I were, and had a talent in that direction, I should have self-respect enough to know that it would not contaminate me. But you need not have such things said about your wife. I shall give you back your freedom. I have explained it to you, Douglas; if you do not believe me you cannot love me. There might be times in the future when I should need both love and trust from you, and recalling this time I should have no faith to ask for them. The most terrible word to wreath itself through the life of any couple is the word mistake. It is well that we have learned this, before it is too late. Here is your ring, Douglas. The locket I shall keep, because your brother gave it to me."

"Madeline, I shall not refuse forgiveness if you ask it."

"'Forgiveness!' I should be untrue to myself, if I were to ask it. If to dance and to act are sins, as you think, if I have done wrong, and you have always done right, you should have been charitable. If God is with you and against me, I should be sadly in the minority without your bitter judgment. God bless you always, Douglas!"

I would willingly ask your pardon, if I were convicted by my own conscience."

"You should ask forgiveness of her!"

The unseen prompter startled him, but the strict prejudices of years were not to be easily overthrown.

"Good by, Madeline; I hope you, too, may be blest!"

Phil and Miss Cragie wondered at the estrangement, but asked no questions. The sweet, proud face told no tales.

Hurrying homeward one night, past houses where heavily-curtained windows shut in the warmth and light from the passers-by, she came to a charitable home that sent a generous track of light into the street; she walked more slowly; a woman was holding a child in her arms and singing:

"It may be for years, and it may be forever."

Madie went on, busily thinking; the words had come, as if in answer to her thoughts. "I have taken up my work again. I shall carry my Torch, 'It may be for years——' "

Phil met her. "I thought perhaps you would walk, as it is so pleasant to-night."

"I am glad you came to meet me; I am tired of my own company." She did not see the pitying look that Phil gave her.

Madie ran up to her own room; while Phil managed to say to each member of the family: "Do not tell her until after dinner."

"How quiet we are to-night! Let us go to the piano and sing something, Phil."

Phil looked at his uncle; the kind-hearted man dreaded the task before him. "Madie, I have heard from your father to-day."

"A letter from papa? Aren't you going to let me see it?"

"Why don't you tell her at once? She can bear it just as well as we can. Frank is very sick, and your mother has sent a telegram; so you'll have to get ready in a hurry."

Phil caught her in his arms. "Darling, don't feel so

badly; people—doctors even—are often mistaken; he may be better when you get there. Would you like to have me go for Mr. McLean?"

Madie shook her head. "No, he doesn't love me any more."

"The idiot," growled Phil, under his breath.

"I'd like to see Jean."

"I will go for her."

She packed hurriedly, yet everything was thought of, and messages left for each friend, rich and poor.

Miss Cragie came and stayed with them until Madie left them. "You will be so tired, dear, when you get there. Let me do what you have to do."

"No, Jean, I want to be busy. Aunt Anna and Uncle Joe have both offered their assistance, but I couldn't accept."

Mrs. Carter was busily packing her own belongings. "I shall go with her," she said with determination.

"Madie might as well be alone, for all the sympathy she will get," said Phil.

"I shall see to both," said Mr. Burton.

"Uncle Joe, I'm proud of you. Your company will be such a comfort to Madie and all of them."

Madie drew her cousin's head down, that she might whisper to him: "Phil, be kind to Douglas and help him all you can, for my sake."

Phil promised, and, although it sometimes "went against the grain,"—as he said—when he thought of Madie, he kept it faithfully.

"I cannot bear to have the train stop at all; the miles are counted off so slowly," said Madie.

"I know, Madie," her uncle said, with ready sympathy.

"Nothing is ever gained by fretting," said Mrs. Carter.

Madie made no reply, but leaned her head upon her hand and thought drearily of the past and future.

They found Mr. Burton in the same condition that he had been when the message was sent. "Typhoid pneumonia, and a very bad case," was the physician's answer to Mrs. Carter's question.

It was several days before he realized that his brother, sister and Madie were with him. After the fever turned, and his brother had gone back to his home, it was to his eldest daughter that he looked for entertainment.

"Doesn't it seem to you that he is a long time getting well?" Mrs. Burton enquired of Mrs. Carter.

"I don't know very much about the disease, but he doesn't gain strength very fast. I wonder if the doctor knows what he is about?"

"He is considered a very excellent physician."

This illness had drawn largely from the small income. "It is time for me to begin to carry out my plans for the general welfare of my people," Madie decided. She had been busy with pencil and paper for some time. "I have reckoned carefully. I believe we can do this, and I believe, too, that we can do it successfully. 'It may be for years,' but I do not believe that my life will be a failure 'forever.' When Christa comes we will talk with papa and mamma."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"THE HEADLIGHT."

When Christa came home in the spring, her father was only able to walk about the house. "Something must be done by us girls."

Madie had told the story of her broken engagement to her mother, and now repeated it to her sister. "You did what was right," said Christa; and the subject was not mentioned again.

"Papa is worried about finances, I know. Wouldn't it be better to talk with him now?"

"I think the sooner the better," Christa answered.

So Madie went to her father, as she had gone on her sixteenth birthday. "Papa, what is troubling you?"

"I ought not to tell you; for then you will be worried also."

"But I wish it, papa. It will make me happier than anything else on earth to be able to do for you and mamma. Are you worrying about money matters?"

"Yes; I do not know what we shall do if I do not get well before summer comes."

"Papa, will you listen to my plan?"

"Willingly, my daughter."

"The farm has not paid us very well since it was rented; you cannot attend to it yourself; let Christa and I invest in some business that would enable us to support the family. It would pay better than teaching or sewing, and that is all either of us can do, here at home; and Christa could go on with her drawing and painting."

"What is the business?" Mr. Burton asked. He was amused with what he considered a girl's idle words.

"Mr. Allen will sell his newspaper, and if we can sell the farm, we can buy it. The editor told me that I under-

stood editorial work, and with your good judgment, and mamma's and Christa's help, we are bound to succeed! Why can't it be 'Burton & Daughters' as well as 'Burton & Sons'? Bert and Benjie can help with the compositor's work, after school and during vacation."

"You have thought it all out, I see, and I am half inclined to believe you are right. We will have very little ready money, unless I do sell the farm."

"I want to buy the job press, too; that will take nearly all the funds, but we shall be able to take care of all, I am almost certain."

When Mrs. Carter was apprised of the plan, she scouted at the idea. "It would be nice, if you could succeed, but of course you cannot; who ever heard of two girls, the oldest not twenty-two, running a newspaper?"

Her opposition only strengthened her brother in his determination to let his daughters go on with the enterprise; so the farm was sold and the paper bought. Nearly all the former help were retained, and after the first were respectful to their girl employers. It was not always smooth and easy work, but they did not expect it, and were brave and resolute.

"If you lose every cent you have, you can come on the city, and disgrace the family. You can't have any of my money to sink," said Mrs. Carter.

"We don't want it," Christa returned quickly. Both of their uncles wrote and proffered help.

"We do not need it, we are working on borrowed capital now. If we should ever be in need, we will accept your aid gratefully," Madie wrote in reply. "I do not mean that time shall ever come," she said firmly, as she folded the letters.

She solicited subscriptions and advertisements for her paper. "I will not cringe and beg help because I am a woman; an advertisement is just as good in my paper as in any other."

"Head your editorial column 'Burton and Burton.' It is your paper and not mine," said her father.

It was a pleasant sanctum to enter; the youthful faces

were so earnest, and the smiles were so pleasant and friendly, that many who went to censure, gave praise.

Many of the exchanges overlooked their paper entirely. People "wished them success, but did not know as they cared to take the paper; several papers and periodicals were already subscribed for, and times were hard." This to them. Afterward: "Those Burton girls are very egotistical if they think they can take up Allen's paper right where he left off, and make a success of it."

The other Clayton newspapers treated their readers to brief witticisms about the girl editors.

"Never mind," said Madie. "The *Headlight* can flourish without caustic wit at the expense of our contemporaries."

While Aggie, who was in the office, said: "Be tender of them. Perhaps if we girls had had no better chance than those men have, we would know no more than they do."

"I want my paper to be a helper to its readers, and I am going to employ just as many of my own sex as I can."

The young editors sat up late at night, and studied, and talked with their father upon tariff and finance, and other important questions. "Can you fill your paper every week?" Christa enquired.

"We shall fill *our* paper every week. We will not have a patent sheet. If we cannot find sufficient matter to fill a paper of this size, we will take a smaller sheet."

"I pledge you my heart and hand and what little brains I possess," said Christa merrily.

Mrs. Crowan came promptly forward. "I am going to take your paper, and so will every neighbor that I have any influence over."

Mr. Burton prepared a series of historical sketches, which were interesting to the *Headlight* readers, and also helped him to while away the hours he was obliged to spend indoors.

One day a man came into the office. "Be you girls running this paper?"

"Yes, sir," said Madie.

"And do you think you can do this work as good as a man?"

"Not so well as some men, and better than others. Yes, I think we can do the work as well as a man."

"Well, I want it understood that I ain't a going to read no articles on politics that's written by a woman. You don't know nothing about it, and you hain't no business to; you can take my name off your list; I've got a few neighbors that's going to do the same." Turning on his heel, this "citizen of the United States" marched off.

Madie dropped her head upon her hands. Christa, who was designing some pretty Easter cards, looked at her sister fondly. She laid down her brush, went close to Madie and peered over the desk, and under, and away back in the pigeon holes. "I thought I smelled fire, but it has gone out. Poor little Torch!"

Madie smiled, and, turning to her desk, wrote a pleasant article for girls, full of suggestions for those of them who were standing alone in the world. When she had it completed she read it to Christa.

"Good!" was her laconic compliment.

"Jack's Afire," cried Madie as she carried her copy down stairs. Bert came in with a letter from Phil. Madie read it aloud; he commended his cousins for their energy and "grit."

"I used to think that a literary course was my destiny. For a time most of my mail consisted of bulky letters, a part of the contents of which I had seen before; accompanying these, the brief sentence, 'Not suited to our column,' or better still, 'Declined with thanks,' or 'Respectfully declined,' but the best of all was when not a word accompanied the familiar sheets. I have read that the 'Postal system never paid for itself,' but I verily believe, if I had continued my literary pursuits a few years longer, that it would have made rapid strides toward a firm financial basis."

Then followed a message to each, and one for his "old schoolmate Aggie."

"He is the only real happy person that I ever knew, in whom I could take any interest," said Aggie, when she read the letter. She sent a bright message back.

Phil recalled the rag carpet comparison of a few months before, when the letter reached him.

"There is a good deal of fancy stripe in her make-up," he said, and thought of her all day while making his rounds.

Miss Cragie occasionally mentioned the mission school, and sometimes in a casual way, that Mr. McLean was still doing good work in the city, but she did not tell how worn and ill he was looking. He was beginning to realize that the woman he had so severely censured was necessary to his happiness, but he continued his work with dogged perseverance. "She will be happier as it is," was the thought with which he tried to comfort himself.

While Madie, in her western home, held her Beacon bravely.

"I am only a bill of expense, and no help to any of you." Madie laid her hand quickly over her father's mouth, and covered his face with kisses.

"Papa, do you know that life would be terrible without you? You will soon be well and strong, and able to take charge of our paper. You said that this 'helplessness was next to death;' I know something worse than death, papa—to wake up and find that someone you loved and trusted doubted you, or had proven false."

"I understand, Madie, and I honor you for the work you are doing. He is a just man, and will see his error sometime." Mr. Burton had never called his daughters by their pet, home names until this sickness.

Mrs. Carter still looked with disfavor upon this journalistic work. "See how tired Madie is; the boys ought to be taken out of school and put to work. The girls are out of their sphere entirely!"

"The boys shall not be taken out of school; they can do better work after they are educated, and their lives will not be filled with regrets." Madie was in earnest, and spoke with emphasis.

"It is very lonely for me here; you don't seem to think what I am giving up for your sakes."

Madie had already gone to the office, so Mrs. Burton spoke for her: "Sarah, if you are not happy with us, do not stay."

"Oh, of course, if I'm not wanted, I'll go right off!"

"You are determined not to understand me," Mrs. Burton said sadly.

Whenever a failure came, Madie would say: "Please not to mention it to Aunt Sarah."

One morning, in the spring, she noticed the tops of some willow trees that had been cut off in order to make the tree branch lower down, and brought in by a subscriber to pay for his paper. The branching limbs caused them to lay up lightly and look like a huge pile of wood; other trees were putting forth bud, and leaf, and blossom; so these broken limbs sprouted and grew. "I wonder if I am like that pile of wood—dead to all effort and do not know it?"

Her mother heard her. "Under the right circumstances they will grow."

"Yes, and I suppose I will, too."

When Mrs. Crowan saw the wood pile with its green branches, and Mrs. Burton had told her of Madie's words, she said: "Everything has to be pruned and trimmed; folks need a limb of discontent or a knob of temper lopped off once in a while. I hate to see 'em take the whole top clear off from a willow, and make them artificial looking. Let 'em grow straight just as they want to! Now Madie has gone through the pruning process; but that aunt of hers wants to take the top clear off and spoil all the natural woman there is in her."

Madie felt to-day as if her load were almost as heavy as the burden laid upon Atlas; but she did not for a moment think of laying it down. Christa, too, was sober. Robert Peyton had come to her with the one question.

"I cannot leave Madie. Do not ask me, Robert; but I cannot do without your friendship."

"That you shall always have, Christa."

So he came and went as usual. And no one but they two knew of her sacrifice.

Mattie and Alice Crowan were attending school in Clayton. Mrs Crowan always called on her friends when she came to the village. Madie was glad to find her there when she went home to dinner.

"How is the work getting along?"

"Well-ly and illy," Christa answered.

"Then you are doing as well as anyone?"

"It is hard for one person to write a letter that will be interesting for everyone to read. Some of our subscribers want us to devote more of our paper to politics. Some want two Sunday columns instead of one. Some want us to be neutral on everything. And they pay us in butter, cheese, chickens, potatoes and salt pork. Sometimes our cellar looks like a provision store; and again there doesn't seem to be anything in it. People choose their own time to pay us."

"Well, Madie, you'll find most everybody in this world likes to do just what he'd ruther."

"My funnygraphs are about as hard as anything. I usually write them and tell them as stories here at home. If no one laughs, I set them down as unseaworthy for the Ocean of Mirth; if they are moderately amused, I use them to coast along the shore, that is if I need them to fill up my column; but if they evoke hearty laughter, I launch them for the full voyage. I will not have vulgar fun."

"I suppose it is hard to make people laugh through a whole column; but when it is done, you have done a more benevolent thing than you would to make 'em cry."

Mrs. Crowan was right. Many of the readers turned eagerly to that sharp column filled with refined wit, such as only a woman can write.

"Christa, you must take the obituaries and wedding notices; the former make me sad for the whole week, and the latter I can't quite handle," Madie had said when they began their work, and Christa readily consented.

They printed wedding cards, election tickets, auction

notices, blanks and show bills. If one wanted a dainty card or programme, he went to the assistant editor of the *Headlight*.

"Let us go to Miss Burton; she will get up something neat, and tasty, and cheap for our commencement programme," said one of the High School committee.

"And they are both so obliging," said another.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SHORTS, MIDDLEINGS AND SOME BOLTED FLOUR.

Commencement drew near. "I shall use my descriptive powers more on the girls' essays than their dresses, and that will help them to be more careful of mind than matter." Madie looked up to see someone entering the sanctum. She stepped down from the stool, but Christa was before her.

"Ralph, what a grand surprise this is!"

He turned to speak to Madie, "You have changed more than I expected."

"We ought to expect it from all our friends as the years go by," she said, as they shook hands.

He looked in vain for the impulsive girl of three years before. The childish, innocent face was there, but a woman looked out at him through those brown "windows of the soul."

"I was going East and thought I would make you a flying visit." He had not heard of the broken engagement. "She does not look happy; I hope she is not going to make a mistake. I do not want her happiness wrecked, too," he thought, as he watched Madie at her desk. He had received no word from her for more than a year, and readily guessed that Mr. McLean objected to the correspondence.

Madie was glad to have him with her again, but she was not confidential with anyone, save her mother and Christa, in regard to her broken engagement.

"I am going to write up the school to-day; will you go with me, Ralph?"

For answer he took his hat and walked with her. "Students are the same the world over; studious, indolent, careless, thoughtful; and a few will be impertinent if

they dare," he said, when they were in the sunny classroom.

They visited the Latin class. "My mind has gone back to our old jolly, care-free class. The same room, with Prof. Pearce working as hard as ever, but with the exception of his, I do not see a single, old-time face. That so many changes can be made in so short a time is a mystery!"

"Move on, and the vacuum is soon filled; in fact there never is a vacuum, the ranks are always full."

"They are reading Cæsar, and are stumbling on the same sentences that we found difficulty in translating." Ralph was busily thinking, so Madie ceased her comments and took her tablets.

The man beside her had gone back to his Alma Mater. He saw the lake beyond the hills, and the old stone buildings where he had spent his student life; then to his work in the mountain city. Through it all he had carried the image of this girl beside him, yet she was farther from him in reality to-day, than she had been in his dreams in those days that had gone by.

He looked at the little hand moving rapidly over the tablet. "Does this reverend gentleman appreciate her as I would have done? But such thoughts are dishonorable; I will not think them."

One day—that stood out in his memory of this visit like a monument with a great joy engraved upon it—he and Madie drove Leon out to the farm. The country was lovely, putting on a fresh brightness before the coarser growth of midsummer came upon it. They called at Mr. Crowan's.

"You look as if you had been resting to-day, Madie."

"I have been; we had such a lovely ride out here."

"Each breeze brought a fancy," said Ralph.

"Many winged their way through my brain; but not one stopped long enough for me to catch it; so they were only ghosts of fancies."

"That's just about the way my fancies all are; they just come for a minute and go again; I enjoy 'em like every-

thing, but I can't fix 'em up for anybody else to enjoy like you can, Madie. I only get an idea of the ground plan; I can't build the thought from it."

"Mrs. Crowan, I wish you'd write for our paper." Her hairpins fairly danced. "Write for your paper! Why, it will all be shorts and middlings, and you will want number one wheat flour."

"There is a good deal in *middlings*. I know you can say something that will interest our readers."

"I have a good will to try it; there are lots of things I'd like to give the world my opinion on."

"I am sure you will make many friends by doing so."

"I don't think anyone has so many friends that she won't have a real glad, strong feeling when she meets with a new one. I've heard a number of folks quote from your paper, and one of the best men in Clayton said it was the only paper he took that he was willing his daughters should always read every word of every issue."

"That has rested me as much as the ride."

"I like to tell sensible folks the good things I hear about them. You have been to your old farm?"

"Yes. Mr. Mills was anxious to see it again."

"It has changed very much in three years."

"I always notice the change when we go by. Mr. Mills, of all things in the world, I hate to see a place look old and feeble about the most. Did you call on Mrs. Chipman?"

"No. I didn't want to go in."

"I don't believe you could have got in, unless it was one of her cleaning-up days. She is one of the kind of women who is always a going to and never does. I don't dislike her at all, but I am not a bit interested in her. You go there and she acts polite, and acts friendly, and acts glad to see you, and when you go away, you feel as if there had been an awful sight of acting about all she said and done. She says 'I beg your pardon' about as often as I say 'and,' and she's got so used to it that she says it about as quick. We was at a picnic last week, and she went past a tree where I was sitting. She wanted to go

to the table about a rod away, so she said: 'I beg your pardon for passing in front of you.' There we was right out doors! I would just as soon think of asking pardon of the Chinese every day for stepping *on their feet*, and that would be carrying social cultivation a good ways. I am always expecting such people to be like highly cultivated fruit, apt to spoil easily. Mrs. Chipman is that way about everything, though. She don't like to 'go in front' of anyone, in argument or religion, or anything. How I have run on! I would not have said what I have if I thought you would ever know her. She is only a real good sample of a negative in everything."

Madie laughed as she had not for months before. "You have said enough for a good article already."

Mattie Crowan spoke to her mother after they drove away. "Why didn't you apologize for your appearance?"

"They knew I had been to work in the garden, and both of 'em have good common sense. Besides, if one can't dress and do as she pleases in her own house, where in the living world is she going to have any liberty?" Mattie considered her mother's argument unanswerable, and made no reply.

"Madie is tired half to death, and I know it. I can't see why folks that loaf on street corners have so much muscle, and this little girl, who is so anxious to be and do something, has so little. They are not worn out I suppose; it would not make much difference if they were."

Madie and Ralph, driving home in the twilight with the day's thoughts clinging to them, talked more confidentially than they had yet done.

"We shall establish a daily paper as soon as possible; a city of six thousand inhabitants ought to support one. In a year I hope to try the experiment."

"Are you going to continue in journalism?"

"I intend to. Why not?"

"But I—I—thought that you had other plans?"

"I shall have no plans that are not closely connected with my own people. My home now, will always be my home; I could not leave papa."

"Madie!"—Ralph had never spoken her name like that; she looked up, then turned from him and covered her face with her hands.

"Don't, Ralph, please; I have much to bear already. I know you will not add to my burdens."

"I will not 'add to your burdens,' Madie, if you will not let me lighten them; but you will let me hear from you and your work now and then, or will that be too much to ask?"

"I will write, Ralph; and I hope that both your work and mine will prosper. When you go East you will see Jean Cragie, my dear, loyal, true friend. Will you tell her that I am content, or will be when papa gets well?" Ralph promised.

"Content!" exclaimed Jean, when the message was given her. "She would say that, if her heart should break."

Ralph's strong letters were added to her cousins' and Jean's; Madie called them her "helpers."

True to her promise, Mrs. Crowan began her contributions to the *Headlight*. People read the sharp, homely, original articles with the zest that Americans usually give to a novelty. "My Thinks, by Eliza," were eagerly sought after. The first "Think" she sent to Madie was

"ON FAULT FINDING."

I had an uncongenial visitor to-day. I wasn't very pleasant at first, but I happened to think what some of my friends must have undergone when I took it into my head to go a visiting, so I was careful of her feelings and lived through it; and that is about all we can hope for from such a visit.

The burden of my visitor's song, was her husband's faults. If I could put a little more strength into some of my sisters; many of them are so miserably weak, and that often stands next door to a sin. This woman—whose husband is loyal, loving, indulgent and honest—does not see his good qualities, and imagines she loves someone else.

Some women, when they are sure of a man's love are sick of it right away, and I've known several 'vice versas' of the same condition.

Start right out, girls, to worship him and keep it up! and above all, be loyal and do not speak of each other's faults to a third person. If you loved him once, it is a pretty good sign that there is something in him to love now. Don't leave husband or wife, and try to find perfection in someone else. You'll have to reach heaven before you find that.

We can't always control these hearts of ours, I know; but them that can't are a mighty sight fewer than them that don't want to.

Don't say 'George was profane when I married him; but I broke him of his habit.' He is better than you then, for he did stop his profanity, and you don't stop your bragging.

A stylish man is very attractive to some girls, but you want to study a minute. A white silk may be as good as a black one, but which will be the best after the every-day wear of say ten years. You must expect both to have lost a little of their freshness by that time, but the black will be no other color, you can find the original design if you look for it.

A great many of the 'Lords of creation' seem to think it is for them to say to their wives, 'Take *my* yoke upon you; and learn of me.' But that was given by Him, who was 'meek and lowly in heart,' to every brother and sister that was, or is 'weary and heavy laden;' so both must bear the yoke, ere you 'find rest unto your souls.'

Do not give coarse jokes to a pet idea. So many people who really love each other seem to think familiarity and crossness are the same thing. When we are as careful of the feelings of our own as we are of the world's, and company manners are carried into every-day life, a grand, happy nation will sing,

'HOME, SWEET HOME.'"

"Will you write me an advertisement? I am going to start a lottery?"

Madie took up her pen. "I cannot until I know something of it."

"I intend to pay for it, of course."

"But I could not be paid for advertising a fraud; we want our paper genuine."

"I decline to give you any explanation. A man would be a fool to go into an enterprise that he did not expect to make a paying one. I do not force people to buy my tickets. No one need to spend a dollar if he doesn't want to."

"But you represent it as if it were to their interest to invest."

"I only bait my hook."

"And the poor fish bite and are caught. If they are murdered financially, it will be through no fault of our paper."

"You have lost by this business," he said angrily. Madie made no reply.

"You charge too much a line," said a pompous individual, who had been having some work done.

"No more than the other papers in the city," Christa answered.

"Why don't you praise our candidate?" asked a leading politician of Clayton.

"Because he is not a good man," said Madie. Thus, by their firmness and strict integrity, their readers profited.

Mr. Burton was failing; those who saw him daily noticed it. The physician was again called in, and, after a careful examination, decided that his lungs were still affected.

Mrs. Carter, as usual, gave her opinion: "If you had not spent every cent on that paper, you would be able to do more for him."

"I cannot see even a spark of my emblem of labor," sighed Madie.

"Let me blow an encouraging breath upon it, and perhaps it will give a ray in this darkness," said Christa, coaxingly.

"Madie is angry now," said Mrs. Carter, as her niece left the room.

"She isn't angry at all, but she can't but be sad." Christa was always ready to defend her loved sister.

"No; I am not angry. I shall be, I am afraid, if people do not stop misunderstanding me," Madie said to Aggie.

"My temper is very hard to manage these days; it takes me about half the time to go to each member of the family and take back the things I say when I am irritated."

"Be careful! You are abusing a friend of mine; let us take a walk and you will feel better." The three girls and Robert went down to the river.

"I am not myself to-night; only a figure moving through the crowd. I have 'gone a piece' with every person I have met, and have tried to pry into their thoughts. Some have defied all curiosity——"

"They were just the people that you were most interested in," interrupted Robert.

"And others you read before you get to the corner, and are no more interested in them than you would be in any other advertisement of a free show," said Aggie.

A man was sitting on a rock by the water's edge, his feet just clearing the water, his chin resting in the palm of his hand. He did not notice the group of young people, who walked out on the pier to look back at the city, but continued looking across the river and humming to himself in a dreamy way.

The others heard the low croon, though they could not catch the refrain; the attitude and the contented, half-sad monotone attracted their attention.

"He is not thinking of the present or future, I know; he is dreaming of the past, and there is something bright and tender about it, or the melody would not be on his lips. He is a stranger, but I am sure he is a man of brain and feeling," said Madie.

"Well, we will have it all in a poem to-morrow," said Aggie, as they were leaving.

The man arose, and turned toward them. "Oh, Ma-

die," said Christa, almost choking with laughter; "that is Mr. Roby, the editor of the *Messenger*."

Madie joined in the merriment. "I don't think he has been very kind to us, but after to-night I shall consider him *capable* of a kind action," she said, not willing to give up the fancy she had had.

"No, I do not believe in total depravity, even in a brother editor," said Christa.

Mr. and Mrs. Peyton were calling on the invalid. Mrs. Carter met the girls with a frown. "You have to be at the office all day, and can't spend an evening at home."

"We spend nearly all our evenings at home," said Madie.

"Don't pout."

"There is a difference between pouting and sensitive quiet, Mrs. Carter," said Aggie, taking up in her friend's behalf.

"There isn't much difference between silliness and sin." She had noticed, and been exasperated by the smile on the face of each, when they entered the house. "Silliness is just the opposite of wisdom, and no one ever yet committed a sin that was wise or intelligent. If you engage in wise actions and sayings, you will not grow wicked. So silliness borders on sin."

"If it drives away sadness; it is wise in comforting. You call it silliness; I call it mirth or simplicity; and mirth may stand on the neutral ground between sin and sanctity."

"God does not countenance such things."

"Christ does, and I believe the work of redemption is as great as the work of creation. In fact, I do not see how we can separate the two, Mrs. Carter."

The woman was astonished; she had never before imagined that Aggie Peyton could think or talk soberly.

Mr. Burton had caught a severe cold and was restless and feverish; Madie spent the night with him. In the gray dawn she went to her room for a brief rest. "Twenty-two to-day; the mile-stones that mark the way to eternity are coming very fast, but there are days even now into

which a lifetime of joy or sorrow seem to be crowded. If every year is to be filled with events like the last, my allotted days should be reduced, or I shall have the experience of Methuselah. Why did I say that? He had years only, we of to-day have the experience. It would be nice to have a few years of rest to think it all over. This was to have been my wedding day." She would not allow herself to dwell on the past, and as sleep was far from her, she arose and went down to meet the loving glances and good wishes, which were more grateful to her feelings than costly gifts would have been.

"Madie and Christa are the prettiest girls in town," Bert and Benjie declared.

While Josie said, twining her arms around Madie's neck and laying her soft cheek against her sister's: "She is my own preshiss darling love!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WITH A CLEARER VISION AT LAST.

Two men walked fearlessly into the fever-stricken homes of that great city; the one, grave and calm, speaking with a tenderness hitherto unknown; the other, with a face that wore a shadow for the first time in his life.

"Mr. McLean, you must rest; you were weary before this began."

"The work is mine to do; besides, I am used to it."

Phil was busy night and day, and Mr. McLean was his faithful assistant. "I will write to Madie as soon as I have leisure, and tell her of his grandeur; I am not afraid for her happiness now. I will talk to him, too, for I am proud to call him my friend," he thought, as they went together through those noisome rooms.

One day he made his calls and did not meet his friend. "I will go to his room and see if he is there."

He found him sitting at the window. "I thought you would come," he said faintly. "I have tried to go down to the street, but had to give it up."

"The exhausted body is demanding rest. Sit still," said Phil, as Mr. McLean attempted to stand. "I knew you were doing more than you ought." He touched his wrist with quick, professional skill, walked to the table and prepared some medicine. "There! take this and get to bed," he said peremptorily.

"No, I shall be able to help to-night."

"Do as I tell you." And the man, who had ruled all his life, meekly obeyed.

"Phil," he said presently, ignoring title and all, save the familiar name, "this was to have been my wedding day."

Phil laid a cooling bandage around his head. "We shall have that yet, and I shall expect to be 'best man.'"

"I have written to *her* to-day, but I have not sent it; will you post it for me?" Phil took the letter. "I wronged her, but I have begged her forgiveness, and she will not cherish the remembrance; she will forgive me, I know."

"Madie will both forgive and forget. I shall have to leave you now, Douglas, but I shall come back."

Phil went directly to Miss Cragie. "Mr. McLean is coming down with the fever; he is so exhausted, I am afraid he will not pull through. Ought I to send for Madie?"

"Yes; immediately," she answered.

Phil went to the telegraph office and sent the message, "The next thing is to procure a nurse," he said, when he reached his uncle's. "It will be a hard matter; the professionals are all busy. We could get any amount of help from his poor people, but I am afraid to trust such a serious case as his promises to be with an inefficient person."

Carrie, who was visiting there, said: "I will go with someone. I do not know what to do, but will follow your directions."

"I will go with you," said Mr. Burton.

"Then I shall get Mrs Grenall, and come as a relief watch," Mrs. Burton promised. "It is dreadful to think of his being there alone."

"Thank you, I feel relieved. Do not fear contagion, if you are cleanly and careful to take plenty of fresh air and rest. He is exhausted, or he would not have caught the infection; he has breathed that impure air for weeks, and called himself 'my assistant,' when, in reality, I have only gone to the cases that he has hunted up."

Making his round of visits once more, Phil stationed himself beside his friend.

"Madie, do you know what day this is? I was too stern, and too strongly prejudiced, Madie, but I will never be so again. They say you are tired, dear; I am so tired, too. Will you put your little hand—with the ring on—in mine, and say 'Douglas' just as you did that night? I'll be rested then. The ring is fastened to my locket, will you bring it to me, Madie?"

"Send for her," said Carrie, sobbing.

"I have," her brother answered.

"Oh, God, don't let it be too late!"

Madie was coming, in response to the despatch she had received on her birthnight.

"I am so sorry, darling," said Christa, as she helped her to get ready.

Phil handed the answering message to his uncle. "She will be here to-morrow night." Then gave his attention to the sick man, who raved and called for Madie, or whispered for her to "come and hold his head together with the hand that had the ring on."

The four who alternately watched beside him, prayed that he might be spared.

"Phil, how is he?" asked Madie, as she stepped from the platform, among the surging crowd.

"No better." In the carriage he drew her to him. "You must be prepared for a great change, darling."

She clasped her hands tightly together, and made no answer.

They were all waiting there, as if they would help to keep the great shadow from her.

"I cannot have him excited. You had better rest before you see him," said Phil.

"He may be calling for me now. I will be very quiet and brave. Uncle Joe, Jean, all of you, let me go now!"

"It is the most merciful thing for both," said Jean.

"Thank you, Jean." In even Uncle Joe's and Phil's eyes there was a moisture at the pathos in her voice.

Carrie took her hat and cloak, and she went in alone. "Douglas!" the sweet voice pierced through the fog of the fever, to the clear reason beyond.

"Madie, you have come!" She was nearer to him in his weakness than she had ever been in the old days of his strength and arrogance. He rested, for the first time since his illness, holding her hand tightly. During those days of suffering, when reason seemed entirely gone, Madie's voice never failed to reach through the darkness.

"Madie, little helper, are you sorry you married me?"

"No, Douglas."

"I shall try to make you happy. I used to try to make you good, and all the time you were better than I. Did you know I was afraid you would not come back on our wedding day? It seemed a long time, but you will stay with me always now?"

"Always, Douglas." She went to her cousin. "Phil, can't you save him?"

"I am doing my best, Madie, and have called in other physicians." He felt the failure and weakness of human skill, as he had never felt it before.

"I know you will do all that can be done," she said sadly, as she went back to her post beside Douglas.

When the fever left him, he knew them all, but Madie's was the first face he saw. "You are here, and I have not been dreaming!" he whispered. She laid her face down beside him. The others noticed the gray pallor of his countenance.

"You are tired, Madie, but could you stay with me alone, for a little while?" Phil beckoned them away. "I am going away, Madie; it is better so;" she tried to stop him. "No, dear, you were young and I was middle-aged. I would have crushed your young life, yet I loved you from the first, Madie, only I didn't understand. I was coming for you, coming to beg your forgiveness, and you would have given it?"

"I gave it long ago, Douglas. Phil gave me your letter, but I was not angry before that. I have the ring on my finger; it shall never be removed again."

"You will never forget me, Madie; but if another man should come to you, as I did such a short time ago, say yes if you can."

"Douglas, don't."

"I have seen him and know him to be a grand man. I knew he loved you when I read his letter. I was jealous and angry then, but now I am willing that he——"

"Douglas, I can't bear it."

"Only this: I want you to remember in the years to come that I desired your happiness. Don't forget my

people, Madie; come to them sometime and tell them I hope to see them all one day."

"I will, darling; some of them have been here every hour, bringing fruit and flowers and kindly wishes for you, and have gone away weeping when they were told you were no better. Try to rest, Douglas, and get strong."

"I shall be better and stronger very soon, dear. I have written it all out. All I have is yours, to do with as you will."

Madie was putting the gray hair back from the white forehead. "Douglas, forgive me."

"I have nothing to forgive," he said, remembering with a pang their last meeting.

"Please try to get well, for my sake."

"If I could, Madie, but it is of no use, and what is death now that we understand each other? The living apart, disappointed and misunderstood, was the greater horror."

The bells, for the Sabbath afternoon meeting, were being rung. A change came over his face as he listened. Madie summoned her cousin.

"I am going very soon. I wish I could call Madie by my name before I leave, but it is too late. Lift me up higher, Phil. Madie, little wife, sit where I can see you. 'God hath joined us together' at the last. Annie's life went out at sunrise, and mine will go as the day closes."

The West was a flood of crimson. At the chapel his people, sad with the thoughts of him, were singing:—

"Nearer my God to Thee."

He heard it, and an inner light, softer and sweeter than the sunset, shone on his face. "Madie, it may be fifty years, but you will come to me at last. Good by, darling!"

"Though, like the wanderer," they were singing now. He was breathing slower. The watchers bent tearfully forward.

"Angels to beckon me
Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."

Did the dying man join in those last words, or did they catch an echo through the "gates ajar?" Douglas McLean's soul and the melody ascended together.

Phil took Madie by the hand. "Come, dear;" but Madie did not hear him, the reaction had come.

They carried him to the chapel, where so much of his grand work had been done, that all might see him again. It was a simple, touching ceremony, and every seat was "reserved for the mourners." The long procession followed him to that quiet home, where could be heard the sweet whispers of Peace, in the leaves as they rustled downward, and the soft song of the birds, as if they would wake naught but sweet echoes in "God's acre," and left him there, covered with blossoms, which mutely said, "Lord, keep *his* memory green."

A grand man, whose nature was simple as a child's; only warped, because the first ten years of his life he was made to think that Christianity and soberness, and deviltry and cheerfulness, were synonymous terms. And until ready to leave this world, when the broad light of the next was breaking upon him, he had never stepped from the shadow of that dogma. The grandest eulogy I can pronounce upon anyone. I give to him. Those who knew him best loved him best.

"Phil," said Madie, the second day after the funeral. "I should like to look over Douglas' papers. I must go back soon. Will you go with me?"

"Yes, Madie, I am willing to do all I can."

They found all her notes and letters laid carefully away; then sermons and lists of visits to be made, and lastly, "the will," leaving all to "my promised wife."

"Oh, Phil!" Madie broke into violent sobbing. Her cousin knew the tears would be a relief, and left her to herself for a few moments.

"I will see that everything is packed away, and will wait your further orders," he promised, when she had grown calmer.

"Phil, I have decided now; I shall take his books and

paintings, and his few treasures beside; the other furniture and clothing we will give to those who need them."

"There isn't much clothing; he always gave away so closely."

"The money I shall leave with you to use for the poor—his poor—you have been with him and will know when and where to use it. He has spent his entire income for them, and often, I presume, infringed upon the principal. I think it must have been—from what I have heard him say—a large property at one time, although he was always careful not to tell of his generosity." Madie's lips quivered again, and the great tears rolled down her cheeks.

"He was 'one of nature's noblemen,'" said Phil, knowing that praise of him would be a comfort to her. At first he tried to dissuade her from her purpose. "You can do a great deal with this money yourself, Madie, and you ought to use some of it for your own needs."

"No, I shall not take it; we are getting along comfortably, and I wish to do this in his name; his poor are my trust, you see. The chapel needs enlarging; you can do that and still help the individuals. This is my tribute to Douglas. Uncle Joe will help you in the disposition of the money."

She went home, and received loving sympathy from each member of her own family. Mrs. Carter waited, what she considered a reasonable time, and then asked for "the particulars concerning Mr. McLean's death."

Mrs. Burton spoke almost angrily: "Sarah, you shall not ask her to tell that which will nearly break her heart!"

"Very well, but I do not see why she should grieve; he was not very kind to her; she has never confided in me, yet I am sure they had had some trouble before she came home last spring. I presume, however, that he tried to rule her."

"Auntie, you shall not speak of him in that manner! He was good and noble; he belonged to me, and stands to-day without a peer in my thoughts of all men. I will not hear one word in malice or censure of him. Find fault

with me all you will, but Douglas' lips are dumb forever; he cannot defend himself, and no one should have any but kindly remembrance for him; he has passed from earthly judgment. It is cowardly to speak illy of the dead."

"Well, we will not argue further," said Mrs. Carter, as she flounced out of the room.

Madie threw herself into her mother's arms. "Let me be a little girl for a minute, mamma!"

"Yes, dear, as long as you wish," Mrs. Burton said brokenly, and rocked her until her sobs died away, and she was asleep.

"If I ever saw such a baby!" exclaimed Mrs. Carter, when she came back.

"Oh, mamma, how selfish of me," said Madie, starting to her feet.

"Not at all, dear; the chair was large enough for both, and you have had a half hour's rest."

"Will you go with me to unpack the books, if Christa can come, too?"

"Yes, when I have seen if your papa wants anything."

The boxes were unpacked. The volumes were placed in her own room, in the office, and carried down for her father to peruse; the paintings were hung on the wall, and thus she surrounded herself with constant reminders of her lost love.

She again took up her work, and studied, and wrote, and thought for her family.

"You should not work so hard," said Aggie.

"If I were not busy I could not endure this pain. I get through the days because of my work; but oh, Aggie, the nights are dreadful! I wonder, sometimes, if I am the same girl who used to dance, and sing, and romp, and play; or was it someone unlike myself, with whom I was very well acquainted?"

"We all have days of feeling unreal to ourselves," said Aggie, with her bright face saddened.

Mrs. Carter left them late in the autumn. "There is no use in my sacrificing myself any longer. I am provoked at Madie for not taking that money. She could

have done a great deal with it, and given up this editorial work altogether."

"I think she did perfectly right," said Christa, "and neither you nor I will ever understand the height and depth of a nature as unselfish as Madie's."

If Madie had accepted the money, Mrs. Carter would have told her that she would not have made friends with Mr. McLean for that amount of property. She was always on the contrary side, and, as Mrs. Crowan said, "A contrary person is one that likes to be lonesome in everything."

Phil wrote of his work, and of the good the money was doing. "They bless him and you daily. The monument you selected is erected now; it is pure and simple as the man whose good deeds it commemorates."

Ned and Sada came up to spend the holidays with their "best friends," bringing a little Madeline with them. "She is the sweetest baby I ever saw," said the proud father, "and she looks just as Madie did when she was small."

Sada's sympathy was of the soothing sort, and it was pleasant for Madie to have her there. Ned's quick insight into business matters, together with his legal knowledge, was of great benefit to his young cousins. "Do they need pecuniary aid?" he asked of Aggie and Robert.

"They will not accept it unless they are obliged to. They are determined to help themselves, and I'm proud of their independence," said Aggie.

"So am I," said Ned.

"Rest assured, I shall not see them suffer." Robert betrayed his secret to Ned, as he spoke.

"I think that Robert and Ralph will both be rewarded for their patient waiting one of these days."

"Oh, Ned," said his wife, "you are getting to be a regular match-maker."

"Why shouldn't I, when the only one I ever made has turned out so well for me?"

Sada smiled, but grew sober instantly. "I don't know about Christa; but Madie never will marry" she said, confidently.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"THE HOUSE THAT 'JACK' BUILT."

The *Headlight* was on a firm basis. In the spring they enlarged their quarters and "opened up" a daily paper. "It will be difficult for the first few months. After that, I think it will be a success," said Madie.

But her self-congratulations were of short duration. Mr. Burton had caught a severe cold and did not rally from it.

Mrs. Burton and her daughters consulted with the physician: "As I told you last season, his lungs are affected. A year or so in the mountains would probably help him, for they are not beyond healing yet, but the spring months will be very bad for him in this climate. I should say that a year where it is high and dry would prolong his life for twenty years yet."

"Someone will have to go with him," said Christa.

"That someone must be you, mamma."

"Madie, how can I, or how can either of us go?"

"We shall see." She looked at her library: "No, I cannot sell anything belonging to *him*."

Christa was busy with her own thoughts and plans, while she worked in the office, that day. When the carriers departed with the last papers, the sisters walked home together; yet they were strangely silent.

Madie sat with her father that evening; when she joined Christa, her mind was fully made up. "I want to talk with you, dear."

"And I want to talk with you," said Christa, sitting on the foot of the bed, swinging a shoe back and forth by her little finger run through the buttonhole.

"I have a plan," said Madie.

"So have I," returned Christa, with a forced smile.

"Papa must go; and mamma must go with him."

"We can manage here at home."

"There's Leon, Christa; he must be sold."

"Madie, there's Daisy; she must go, too."

"Christa, listen! Josie will want her cup of milk, and Daisy will not bring so much in the market as Leon. We ought to keep one of Uncle Joe's gifts, and we will not need Leon after papa is gone. He would only be a useless expense. We can give all this money to papa, and will have more from the paper to send him after he reaches his destination. We do not want to mortgage the place."

Christa saw the force of her sister's reasoning. "You know best, you always do." She opened the door. "Mamma, will you come here a moment?" Mrs. Burton came. "We have decided that you are going with papa."

"I cannot go and leave you."

"Papa will need you more than we possibly can."

"He cannot go alone, and who knows what he needs so well as you? The expenses will be paid, do not worry."

She went away, doubtful still.

"It was hard for you, Madie, to make up your mind."

"I am almost ashamed to confess that it was, Christa. I love Leon so well, but I love papa a thousand times better, and, waving her hair-brush, "'Jack' is still 'Afire!'"

Aggie and Robert Peyton came in the next evening. "Papa and mamma are both going away. The doctor advises it, and we command it. We shall keep house, with the aid of Mrs. Bruce, who says she is 'willing to wash and iron, and help Saturdays to rid up the house.'" Christa was making an effort to be cheerful.

"Good!" said Aggie; "I'll help all I can."

Madie went over to the sofa where Robert was sitting. "I am going to sell Leon. Do you know of anyone who wishes to purchase a horse?"

"I will buy him of you," said Robert, without a moment's hesitation.

"Do you really want him?"

"I do, indeed. I have been looking for a horse, and Leon suits me better than any I have seen. Shall you sell the harness, and phaeton, and cutter?"

"Yes; I shall not need them when Leon is gone."

"Madie, let me loan you the money."

"No, Robert; I cannot."

"Then I will buy them in the morning; and you shall always have the refusal of him; I shall never let him go to any other."

"Thank you, Robert; I may want to own him again; but I shall not sell him with that understanding, for I may never be able to do it. I sold Star, you remember."

Robert did remember.

Mr. and Mrs. Burton left the next week. "It seems like a funeral," said Mrs. Peyton, wiping her eyes when she saw Robert and Mr. Peyton assist Mr. Burton to the carriage.

"He may never be brought back alive; but this is his last chance," said the doctor.

"Help your sisters all you can, my sons, and obey them as you would us."

The manly boys readily answered: "We will, papa."

"Daughters, you have been all that children could be to parents. No one can feel more deeply than I the burden that has rested on your young shoulders."

For many days these girls felt their father's parting words following them like a sweet benediction.

"I am glad Aunt Sarah isn't here," said Christa.

"No, I feel *drab* enough as it is," said Madie.

They were returning from the depot. A blind man drew their attention. With one hand he was moving his cane from side to side in front of him, to guide his footsteps. On his left arm he carried a basket of apples. Purchasers were few. An old gentleman touched his arm; he turned his sightless eyes toward him, and eagerly told the price of his fruit.

"Here is a pleasant item for our paper! One old person helping another," Madie said, admiringly. "It is beautiful."

She had spoken too soon; for, with a greedy look at the apples, he said: "Are they a good eating apple?"

"Very, you can try one if you like."

He was about to select one of the largest; but caught a flash from Aggie's bright eyes. "I guess I won't try them. I haven't any change with me this morning."

"He must have known that at first, and that makes his questions inexcusable," said Madie, with a scornful look at the man, who readily understood that it was for him, and slunk away, feeling himself growing shorter at every step.

Robert came up and bought all the apples the blind man had.

"Publish him," said Aggie.

"No, I don't want to do that; but I will give the poor old fruit vender a local, and advise all who go to that part of the city to buy his nice apples."

Madie's little notice caused many to aid the old man, who was trying to help himself.

"How empty the house is! It doesn't seem as if we had as much furniture as when papa and mamma were here," said Benjie, dolefully.

"I want my dear papa and mamma. They are just beautiful! I want 'em so much; I love 'em so much; I want 'em to come back to their little girl."

"Josie! Josie! do keep still; you almost break my heart," said Madie.

Robert called from the street: "Josie, don't you want to go with me for a ride?"

"Isn't that nice of him?" said Madie, when she had tied on Josie's hat and cape.

"He is always nice," said Christa.

Everyone was kind to the little girl, and, with the elasticity of childhood, Josie soon forgot her woes. She did not feel the daily absence as her brothers and sisters did.

"I do not see how you can accomplish so much," said Mrs. Peyton.

"By measuring each duty and each minute together," Madie replied.

"I thought you had gotten beyond housework," remarked another friend.

"No; only gotten *to* it," was the pleasant rejoinder.

“Well, now! I’m just going to tell you,” said this kindly disposed neighbor; “I said, when you bought out that newspaper, that I didn’t believe you’d ever know anything about housework. Sez I: ‘They’ll just work in that office and study up on politics and them things that a woman hasn’t any earthly business to stick her nose into, and they’ll grow masculine, see if they don’t.’ But you haven’t a bit; you’re just as womanly as any girls. I aint the only one as says so, either. Our Nathan used to say: ‘Them girls are nice to talk to, but they’ll make poor wives.’ He fooled himself in picking out a wife—’cordin’ to my notion—Jennie’s kind o’ slack around home, though she does look dretful pretty when she goes out on the street. I have another son I’d like to have you get acquainted with.”

This son was a widower, and was smitten with Aggie Peyton, but she gave him no encouragement. “I have resembled three first wives already; that is something I cannot help, but I can help going to their houses and permitting them to constantly draw comparisons between number one and number two.”

Christa laughed when she heard this speech; her mirth was increased when she saw the lonely man ring Mr. Peyton’s door-bell that evening.

Aggie kept him waiting for several minutes. “I was at work in the kitchen,” she explained, when she came in.

“You seem to enjoy housework; I think every young lady should. My wife—you remind me of her every time I see you—understood all kinds of work; she was a beautiful hand with a needle, as every woman ought to be.”

“I must seem very poorly accomplished,” said Aggie; she did not quite like his attention, nor his *universal labor* views in regard to her own sex.

“My dear young lady, you have a great many beautiful accomplishments, I am sure, just as a woman should have; not that I think a woman should be a drudge, but she could be better able to direct her servants if she understood how to do everything. My wife loved to oversee the

work, and always kept her own accounts; she was a very capable woman."

"Did your wife make her own bonnets?" asked Aggie.

"She usually trimmed them. She was so tasty and seemed to enjoy it. She often used to say, 'A woman is not accomplished unless she can attend to every womanly duty.' I have missed her greatly."

"Can you drive?" asked Aggie irrelevantly.

He looked surprised; "Yes, certainly."

"Of course you can harness a horse, then?"

"Yes," more puzzled than before.

"Can you shoe horses?"

"Why no! I have never tried. That is a blacksmith's business."

"Did you build your own house?"

"I am not a carpenter," he spoke coldly.

"It is beautifully painted; did you do that?"

"Miss Peyton, I am not a laborer nor a mechanic? I am an insurance agent."

"Do men ever make their own clothes? I was wondering to-day if there was ever such a thing known."

"A well-dressed man certainly does not. I am very particular as to my tailor."

"Pray excuse me, but I could hardly believe a man would demand so much more of a wife, than he would of himself. I supposed you would understand all trades. Your wife, you say, was a dressmaker, milliner, steward, cook, laundress, bookkeeper, chambermaid and did fancy work besides. I agree with you that she must have been a wonderful woman; and you are an insurance agent; I am not surprised that you have outlived her."

The widower was really uncomfortable. "I have two friends who carry on a daily paper and they have been criticised for 'stepping out of their sphere.' It strikes me that when a woman is expected to do so much, it is almost impossible to 'step out of her sphere.' I cannot see why the labor question for woman should be so different from the one for men. Although the former seldom 'strike,' it would be as well if they did sometimes."

The resemblance to his deceased wife vanished that evening and was never observed again. He was introduced to Christa Burton and was interested immediately. "Her eyes are a good deal like Martha's." He haunted the office, but the girls were too busy to entertain him. Madie, in her black dress, was too much like a widow. He admired a young girl more, and was only forty-five himself.

One Sunday evening he called for Christa to accompany him to church. Having no good excuse for not going she went with him to the Methodist church.

The subject of the discourse was "Change of Heart," as the minister himself said, "A regular revival sermon in hot weather."

"How did you enjoy the sermon?" he asked.

"I liked it, although he did not preach exactly as I have been taught. Did you like him?"

"I did not think he reasoned quite enough."

"He seemed to know just when to stop. I thought he was honest with himself, and only stated his own convictions. I do not think a congregation can be satisfied with a minister who leads them up to a wall and leaves them there, while he crawls into the chink himself and shuts out the only ray of light they might have. If he only leads them toward the wall, and lets them get the light 'on the slant' from the other world to this, it is a great deal better than to take them into the shadow, and leave them to batter against the wall, before they are ready to be let in."

"I am almost an infidel myself. I presume, because I have reasoned too much. It makes me unhappy, too."

"One is apt to be unhappy if he studies, and tries to understand mighty things, and still remains in doubt. I do not try to argue with, nor teach people who are a great deal wiser than I, and I have never yet tried to tell to God that His creation or plan of salvation was not quite up to my ideas."

"Her eyes are like Martha's only in color; the expression is entirely different." So he departed, searching

still for a wife, with a versatility of talents such as Martha had had.

"Our Daily is not thriving as well as I could wish. The extra expense is great. I dislike the idea of giving it up, because I hate to undertake anything and make a failure of it, and besides I do not want to turn our 'help' off."

"Madie, it is a warm morning, I know, but I didn't think you would let the *fire* go out entirely!" Christa laid her hand on the brown hair, where the shadow slept in the deep hollow of the waves and the sunlight touched the crest. "Just let it smoulder on, little sister; better to blow it out of your own free will than to throw it away to die."

"We must send some money to papa." Madie explained, as she turned to her desk.

"What have you ready for to-day's issue?"

"The report of yesterday's city election; most of the rural districts have sent in their returns, too, and we have the locals. I think there is nothing left but the late dispatches."

"Can you attend to the rest to-day?"

"Easily; are you sick, Christa?" Madie asked anxiously.

"No, dear, but I have some work that I should like to do at home." She stooped and kissed her sister, and went out into the street. Madie stood by the window, looking after her. She was surprised at Christa's desertion, but not at all hurt. It was a principle with the sisters not to ask questions of each other. Each confided as much or as little as she chose. She went back to her desk. An autograph album, that had been brought for her to write in by one of her Sabbath school class, lay upon it.

"These albums are almost a horror to me. I never write well in them. It is useless to look for the best specimen of one's penmanship in an autograph album, or of expression in a photograph." Turning the leaves slowly, she read one after another, simple, silly, witty and wise. She came to a page and read it through slowly, turned back and read it again.

"I am glad I looked at this book to-day; I have had a good word given me." The lines were:

"I hear it singing, singing sweetly,
Softly in an undertone;
Singing as if God had taught it,
'It is better further on.'
Night and day it sings the same song;
Sings it while I sit alone,
Sings so that the heart may hear it,
'It is better further on.'
Sits upon the grave and sings it;
Sings it when the heart would groan;
Sings when the shadows darken—
'It is better further on.'
Further on? but how much further?
Count the mile-stones one by one;
No! no counting—only trusting,
'It is better further on.'

All that day, and for many days after, a voice seemed to whisper the last line.

The paper was being run off; the great steam press, almost human in its marvelous, tireless effort, was striking off the "letters" from these girl editors, to the friends who were watching for them. Madie gathered up the scraps and clippings for the next day's work, and stepped into the composing-room to say a kind word to those who were working there. Many of them were girls like herself, and a pleasant word was like sunshine on a flower. They straightened up and smiled back at her.

"Time," called the foreman. And tongues were loosened as they left their work behind them.

"She's kind to us girls, and to everyone, I guess," said one young girl as she ran down the stairs.

The little locket Madie always wore caught her eye to-night, as it gleamed against her dark dress.

"'Could you come back to me, Douglas! Douglas!'" she murmured. "I wonder if you know how much I miss you, Douglas? If you were only where I could write to you!" The hot tears came, but she crowded them back.

"A letter from mamma," said Christa, when she went home. "Papa is no better, but the physicians there give it as their opinion that he will be. It may take longer for him to get well than they at first expected."

"If he gets well, we can afford to wait. We must write a cheerful letter back to them."

"I am restless, Madie; and I think we will rest better if we do not room together."

"Do as you like, Christa. I will keep Josie with me still."

Christa gathered her drawing paper together and left the room. Mr. Raynor, the leading architect of the place, called.

"Is Miss Christabel at home?"

"Yes, sir. Will you walk in? and I will call her."

"My wife told me that you wished to see me, so I came over," he said, when Christa came into the room.

"Thank you." She closed the door, and told him of the object of her call upon him.

"I will look at your draughts."

She went to her room and brought back a portfolio. Both were soon interested in its contents.

"I am really astonished at your skill, and am willing to trust you with the work for both buildings. If you need any assistance, let me know. I do not like to plan, myself, as I do not think I have originality enough."

Night after night, Christa worked, and planned, and thought. Then sent a huge pile of drawings to Mr. Raynor, who carried them to the stock company. They—after mature deliberation—accepted them.

"Look!" she cried, bounding into the room, and dropping a cheque into Madie's lap. "We can send this to papa, and it will last them for a long time."

"What have you been doing, Christa?"

"You see, Madie, ever since your disposal of Leon, I have been anxious to get partially even with you. I have not forgotten how you kept me the last quarter in Boston. I heard them talking in the office of the new hotel, and from their conversation I got an idea of what they wanted; so I drew an ideal hotel, and planned it all out. Mr. Raynor helped me with some of the specifications, and the result is, the company have accepted 'mine inn.'"

Madie was so lost in admiration of her sister, that she could not speak at first. "Dear me, how our Torch is burning! I think you are holding it now."

“Indeed, not I. Just fanning it into a little brighter flame with my drawing paper while it is in your hands. Five hundred dollars isn’t bad, is it?” she asked gleefully.

“I should think not; and I think we will all have to say that, ‘This is the house that Jack built,’ when we look at that hotel,” said Madie.

A cheerful letter was sent to their parents, who laughed and cried in turn. “We are blest in our children,” said Mr. Burton.

“And in each other,” his wife added.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A SERMON FROM THE "HEADLIGHT."

Those who are in haste to reach the end may omit this chapter, if they choose.

The two rival "Weeklies" were not at all pleased with the "Daily." The "first established in Clayton, and in charge of two women at that." They did not criticise as they had done at first, but they did a more contemptible thing, by treating the efforts of the earnest girls with ridicule.

Madie continued to ignore these editorial sneers for some time; but when she found that the town was divided into two factions, the one for, and the other against, and read such sentences as the following, she decided to answer them.

"The motto of *The Daily Headlight* is: 'Let your light so shine before men,' and should therefore be forwarded immediately to heathen countries."

"*The Headlight* is authority on finance and fashion, being run by the gentler sex."

"We bespeak for *The Headlight* unbounded success, as it is an exponent of political power."

"Modern chivalry demands that we compliment our fair contemporaries."

"The pastors are all out of the city, enjoying their vacation, and I am going to have a sermon in our Saturday evening's paper. There are many things I wish to talk about."

"They helped everyone his neighbor: and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage." Isaiah. 41-6.

This might have been in the day of that good old prophet of the southern country, but if such a state of

affairs could be brought about to-day we should think that the millennium had come.

The prevailing prayer of the people of the Nineteenth Century is fully as selfish, though not as outspoken, as the old deacon's: "God bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four and no more." We are apt to put so much stress in getting ourselves safely and comfortably through *this* world, and only concern ourselves about our neighbor's welfare in the *next*; yet we do very little to help him in his upward path.

It is possible for a person to be a stumbling-block in his own path, but he only trips himself up and that is better than to lie across the path where many are coming; and with sneers, and jeers, and patronizing assumption of superior wisdom and goodness, try to turn them into a road that winds around the hill, lower down.

We honor the man or woman who pays no heed to such an one, and walks grandly in the road previously marked out.

There are many souls before the World's Court of Chancery, whose title has been given, in our human judgment, to the evil one, but there is one Higher Court, the "records must be delivered to the King's Bench," and they may yet be recorded in the Book of Life, if someone, somehow, somewhere—by speaking a kindly word to them and letting them know that human sympathy, and love, and kindness are given them here below—proves to these souls that by the "*Equity of Redemption*" the "estate is of greater value" up yonder "than the sum for which it was mortgaged here."

Sorrow has its own grand ministry. The major chords are swelling out in a grand wordless song, bringing their laughter and sunshine to all, making us think of ourselves and how good a thing it is to be alive! But when the sweet, sad, minor strains come floating into our lives, bringing their pathos and tears, we prove there is something Beyond by crying in our agony and fear, "God help us!" Did ever anyone know of a time of great danger

and grief, when that was not the first involuntary cry from saint and sinner?

Every now and then we hear a stirring missionary sermon, and we put our hands in our pockets and help to send someone to those trans-Pacific countries and think we are answering our text.

A man's influence should be like the waves from the pebble thrown into the sea, widening from center to circumference. First the home, and then the world around you, not the world far off and then the home, there may never be a *return trip*. It is not for all of us to "Let our light shine" across the ocean, but it is something to light up our own neighborhood. We do not "love Cæsar less," but we do "love Rome more." Think of the ignorance and narrowness of a country that boasts of its civilization! We pay to support foreign missions and then sigh that the world is "growing worse every day."

In our humble paper we have striven to notice the good and bring it before our readers. A man stole a crust of bread because he was poor and starving; it was published far and near. The same week another man came and gave to an entire family food and shelter and clothes, and no one knew of it outside the circle where the deed was done.

When we hear people croaking about the sins of the world, we cannot but think that they are below par themselves. Perhaps if we had the same obstacles to overcome and the same people to deal with, that many have who deal with us, we should be no better than those whom we criticise.

We have usually a better knowledge of the motives, which prompts us to say and do, than any other can have. We do not dare to be so egotistical as to think that we are better or wiser than any other; we do try, however, to average with regard to ourselves and our work.

When we hear of some underhanded word or action, we stop and think, would we do that? If we would not, we do not hesitate to say, especially to the guilty party, "That was wrong." We hear of many things that stand

at par, and pass them by unnoticed, but are ready to cry "Bravo," when we are surpassed, as we often are.

How often we hear "that man is a church member, but he isn't a Christian." "There are just as many Christians outside the church as there are in." Prove it to God! The church has brought the world from the dark ages; not those outside. Luther, Melancthon and Wesley, though they did not agree with the church as they found it, were always church men, and so has every person been who has caused a tidal wave of reformation to roll over the world.

"I am just as good a Mason as any Knight Templar on earth!" What would you think of such a man? What if Sherman had marched to the sea with a host of boys in broadcloth? They might have been soldiers just the same, but we would not have believed it until they had done some fighting.

We are too apt to expect perfection in a church member, and to take a good deed as a matter of course. "That's his belief, and no more than he ought to do." But if he do something wrong in our sight, "See what he did, and a church member, too!"

Then we hear, "the church is weak; there are many hypocrites."

Did you ever know of a counterfeit that was not backed by something genuine? If the church of Christ were not worth a hundred cents on the dollar "yesterday, to-day and forever," there would never be a counterfeit Christian.

The false profession will not help nor injure you, and it may be for you or me to "help" this "brother."

We would like to speak of our neighbor's children. We say more before them than we ought. A child's memory is not thrown aside when he reaches manhood; they carry their dislikes and prejudices with them. We let children read vile things many times, that we would blush to have said before them, and they often find them in a family paper.

Sitting at our office window, we heard a conversation,

between two school girls, that was as perfect an imitation of grown-up conversation as we have ever listened to. They met in the street and stopped to converse about their neighbors.

"You haven't been to school lately?"

"No, I've been at home. Mamma has had ever so much company. I'm going over to Mrs. Smith's."

"Jim got drunk the other night, and Katie felt dreadfully."

"My, my! what a pity; but then it's all you can expect."

"I don't know what this world is coming to."

"Joel joined the Temple of Honor the other night, and my brother said he made a splendid speech."

"Did he? I am surprised! I don't believe one of that family will ever amount to anything, though."

"He'll be apt to break his pledge."

"Yes, I don't look for much else."

Those girls had learned something not found in school-room or text book; and not so easily forgotten.

One of the most mischievous boys in the city has been of service to us a number of times. When a relative of his was told of his kindness, he said: "I never should have expected that boy to do so well."

But when some windows were broken by him, while scuffling with another boy, it "was exactly what he expected."

People who are always looking for evil are apt to find it, and we are afraid that they are often glad to have their search rewarded. Those who look for good will be equally successful. The two are more evenly distributed than many are prone to believe.

"They helped everyone his"—sister? How can she be helped when in every new path she ventures to enter, she is met by the club of menace and ridicule, in the hand of a brother who guards the way; she cannot write an article on her country's needs, but she can wash for her countrymen.

Every woman cannot be supplied with a kitchen, nor every man with a spade.

A woman can choose her life-work better than any man can choose it for her.

Did anyone question Clara Barton's earnest womanliness when she went over those southern battle-fields, or through those hospitals? It was a time when no one could stop to ridicule or censure. There are grand exceptional women to-day, as there are grand exceptional men. And on every page of history the name of some brother and sister stand out boldly and beautifully. Do not throw an obstacle in our way, we pray you!

"And everyone said to his brother, be of good courage." There is nothing given so little, and needed so much, as encouragement. How much better work every man, woman and child could do, if every friend would say: "I bid you God speed."

These words should shine like a beacon light, from every point on the shore of the river of Time. No matter what the name of the craft in which we are sailing toward the "Ocean of Eternity." Let the one watchword be "Jesus!" and all creeds and sects will enter together, whether it be guided by the stalwart hand that has grown accustomed to deep waters, through steering the ship of state, or the slender one that dips the oar of the homeward bound vessel, or only the tiny hand of a little child to flutter the sail. We sing:

"Sail on! the morning cometh!
The port ye yet shall win,
And all the bells of God shall ring,
The good ship bravely in."

On Monday morning Madie met the editor of the *Messenger*. "Miss Madeline, if there is anything that I thoroughly enjoy, it is a real good threshing, and you have given it to me handsomely. I was a little piqued, I think, and did not have much idea that you would succeed. I am satisfied now, and I humbly beseech you to forget my ungentlemanly conduct."

"I don't believe I can remember anything at all, even now," said Madie smilingly.

The rain was falling and the leaves dripping with tears.

"If I do not see the sun to-day, I am sure it will be a bright day," she added, looking up at the gray sky.

"I think we both feel better prepared to begin the week's work because of this meeting," said Mr. Roby extending his hand. "I was intending to open up a *daily* in the fall, and it provoked me to think you had beaten me."

"I am sure that both will do well if we try."

"And I am sure that I shall try. Good morning."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CRAZY-WORK PATTERNS!

Our girls tried to carry on their home life as well as to attend to their paper.

In the evening one would rock Josie to sleep, while the other would read or relate some pleasing story, or a little poem, that the younger ones had read with the physical eye only. It was a constant surprise to those boys to hear the bright ideas from their sister, which "oft were thought, yet ne'er so well expressed."

"How in the world do you see so much, Madie?" asked Benjie one evening.

"They are a countless number who have 'eyes and see not,'" she answered with a meaning smile. "Both beauty and duty lie nearer than we know."

"I think you are both beautiful," said Josie emphatically.

"You will always have to drive carefully around the field of thought, or some of the grain will be left standing," said Bert, who was trying to chime in with his sister's thoughts.

"Be careful that you keep in the same field you started out on, Bert, or you may trespass on some other person's ideas," said Benjie.

The boys, taller than Madie, had grown up to her conversation; they were on their good behavior most of the time, though they were real boys, and would break over rules sometimes, yet the spirit of being useful had so permeated the lives of the older sisters, that it was infectious. They were all so anxious that the weekly budget of news to their parents should be filled with good report, that the desire extended down to Josie.

Bert and Benjie had helped at home and in the office during the long summer vacation, and cheerfully as-

sisted after school had begun, whenever they could leave their lessons. The little girl, who spent her time with her sisters in the office, at home and with Aggie Peyton, was puzzling her baby mind with questions as to what she could do. One night, when she knelt by her crib in the room that opened into the one occupied by her sisters, they heard a variation to her little prayer.

"Please, God, bless my papa, and mamma, and big sister, and little sister, and my brothers—both of them—and my cousins and all the folks. Make my papa well, please, and bring him and mamma back home, and have lots of *descriptions* come in for the *Head-light*, and Christa to build more houses; and have my boy doll have a new coat; and now—this is what I want the most of all—please reach down and pull me up a little taller so's I can do something for my folks. It will tickle my papa and mamma so to hear it; don't pull me up so big that they won't know me, but just big enough to help. With lots of love, dear God, I am, your own Josie. Amen."

She had dictated so many letters to her parents that nearly everything she said either began or ended in the form of a letter. Her sisters had become accustomed to hearing her begin her devotions with "My dear God, I want to talk to you to-night."

She had been "pulled up" quite a good deal, but just before she celebrated her sixth birthday, she had an attack of croup, and her sisters were afraid her prayer was going to be answered and she would be "lifted" above all of them. But the morning found her better; Mrs. Peyton and Aggie took her in charge, when the sisters were obliged to leave.

"I am going to take her out home with me; it will do her ever so much good," said Mrs. Crowan, and her words were prophetic. Josie came back to them round and rosy, after having spent three weeks in that pleasant country home.

A year had gone by since Madie stood by that open grave. Her near friends remembered that it was an an-

niversary and were more kind and considerate, if possible, than they had been before.

"I did hope that the sun would shine to-day, but it is dreary without and within," said Christa, looking from the window upon the street to see the drops splash idly down into the gutter.

"Yes," said Aggie, to whom she was speaking, "I feel lonely myself. It seems as if the world were weeping everywhere."

"It isn't a violent rain that promises to leave us before the day is done. It isn't aggressive enough to make me place myself on the defensive when I am out of doors, and it does not sooth and lull as it falls, quieting nerves and bidding earth be glad because of its coming, as is the case with the spring rain. But it is a dreary apologetic sort of a drizzle; I should know it was an autumn rain if I had lost the almanac and could not see the leaves on the trees. It comes down because there doesn't seem to be anywhere else for it to go. The clouds must be glad to get rid of it. It is the most *homeless* rain I ever saw or heard."

"Then treat it with distant politeness as you would any other unwelcome guest. But do not talk about the weather any more; it is not exhilarating to any of us," said Aggie.

Madie opened the piano and played "Douglas, Tender and True," over and over again, sweeping in a minor strain as she transposed it from one key to another.

"Don't, Madie," pleaded Josie, "the piano criesso! Can't you hear it?" She took her little sister in her arms and, in trying to cheer her, left her own sorrow.

"We must have someone to stay in the house all the time, now that winter is coming on," said Madie.

"We might learn of someone from Mrs. Bruce. The fires will have to be kept up and Josie must be kept in doors; shall I call her in?"

"If you will, Christa."

Mrs. Bruce was greatly attached to the girls and was eager to be of service in any way. "My dochter has lost

her gude mon and she has coom fra her ain home to be wi' Donald and mysel'. We hae talked it all ower at the hoos and she is na willin' to go far awa; but she wad be muckle glad to helpit you."

"Mrs, Bruce, you have lightened my burden more than I shall be able to tell you."

"I wadna try, Miss Madeline! I'll go back and tell Mary, and she'll be coomin' to spend the nicht."

So it was that Mary Leith came to preside over the Burton household. Honest, faithful and friendly; Madie and Christa wondered, before she had been there two days, how they could have gotten along without her for so long a time.

Christa detested mathematics, but she was busily ciphering that October day. Madie noticed her perplexed expression.

"What is it, Christa?"

"Preparing a paper on finance. I find, however, that 'it is not suited to our columns.'"

"Why not?"

"It is too personal; it seems as if our business resembles that of the southern planters before the war. They raised more cotton to buy more negroes to raise more cotton. We have taken in money, but we have spent it to enlarge the paper. Machinery and help take off the profits every time. So many people have enjoyed specimen copies. It is a good year for potatoes and our subscribers are determined to pay their subscriptions in that way. I don't believe that a team has come in from the country for a week, without bringing us a few potatoes, or squashes or some vegetable. The house is redolent with onions. The cellar is full and buckwheat and turnips are yet to be harvested. We have told them that we do not need them, but with a smile that strikes me as absolutely fiendish, each one says, 'Such things never go amiss. I thought I'd give you the advantage and let you have them while they are cheap.' The fact is, Madie, fall is here and winter is coming." Aggie came in, as Christa con-

cluded: "I cannot see my way clear to a 'jockey hat and feather.'"

"And if you don't, you will hear:

'I don't think much of you, miss,
Sung by boys and girls together.'"

sang Aggie, finishing out the simple old medley to suit herself.

Christa smiled, and tried to interest herself in something else. A trifle like that is often harder to bear than a greater grief would be, because one feels all the time how foolish it is, and that she can not expect the sympathy of her friends. "I have canceled out one after another needed article. I am tired of my one nice suit."

"Can't you get a suit for twenty dollars?"

"I think I could, Aggie; but I should then be obliged to have a balance of eighteen dollars and sixty-three cents charged to my name."

Madie had left the room, and Christa could talk freely to Aggie.

"Christa, why don't you let Robert take care of you? I know it is the one wish of his life."

"Don't, Aggie, if you love me! I cannot leave dear little Mai with all the burden. She does more now than she ought to."

"Robert would help her, too."

"She would not permit it."

Aggie could not help but admire her independence. "He will win her yet, if he waits patiently," she thought.

"Christa, I have a little money. I wear somber colors, you know, and my suit will only need freshening a little. You shall have your new costume." Madie had gone off by herself, to think it all out, and came back with the conclusion.

"No, dear; I will not be so selfish."

"But I insist upon it, Christa. I shall not use it for myself. The rest of the family are provided for. We will look for a sewing woman to-night."

"There is a little lame dressmaker down street, with the sweetest face I ever saw. She dresses neatly, but so

very plainly that I think she cannot be crowded with work. We will go to her if you 'insist' upon my being so selfish."

The delicately beautiful face of the dressmaker was radiant at the work given her. "May I make the dress just as pretty as I want to?" she asked, in a voice that vibrated like music along the syllables.

"We will trust to your taste," the girls answered together.

She turned her head on one side, and studied Christa's face and figure in a way that amused both sisters.

"I haven't much work at present, so I can dream out a pretty costume," she said blithely. "I was afraid I would have to close my shop; fuel is so high. I am a stranger, and people do not readily patronize one whom they know nothing about."

"Come home with us and do your sewing there. You will have plenty of warmth and light, and will not be troubled with anyone, as we are away all day long." She was pleased with Madie's invitation, and gathered model and patterns together and went to a *home* for a few days.

Christa's fall suit was tasteful and becoming. Robert glanced proudly at her many times, when she first wore it. "The nicest thing about it is that *I* don't feel *new* with it on. I have had dresses that made me feel as if I'd like to go off into a wilderness and wear them until I could feel at ease in them. But this seems made for me," she said, looking complacently at herself, as she turned round and round before the mirror. "Say what we will, a mirror has attractions for even the plainest face. I can look more curiously and more critically at myself than at any other person."

"I agree with you," said Robert. "I do not believe that anyone, but a blind man, can sit or stand near a mirror and not look at himself every few moments."

"And even then he will not have so good an idea of his own expression as of that of the veriest stranger. We always have our *still* look when we consult our mirror or sit for a photograph. Will you stay and do Josie's wardrobe, Miss Ripley?"

"I shall be only too glad. It will be lovely to make her little dresses," the seamstress replied, to Christa's abrupt question.

So the sisters' old clothes were fashioned for the little girl, to look "amaist as weel as new," and the little dressmaker broke into snatches of song as she sewed, and the color came into her pale cheeks. Josie was in raptures and stayed with her constantly. "Hear the birds, Josie," she said, one night just before sunset. "They will be going south soon. If I were blind I believe I could tell the time of day by the birds' songs."

"Your face looks as if the moonlight were shining on it all the time." Benjie's face expressed even more admiration than his words.

"Does it?" and her childish laugh gurgled out. Madie and Christa heard her, and smiled, though they did not know the cause of her mirth.

"Let us have her here over Sunday. It will be much nicer for her than in her lonely room."

"Of course, Madie! It was nice in you to think of it."

Lilian Ripley had never been more highly pleased with any offer of hospitality, than with this simple request from Madie to spend the Sabbath with them. "I am so glad you have asked me. You must have known that I would accept, so your invitation was not an idle one. Sunday away from mother is a very long day. She is coming as soon as I can sail for her, and she will bring home right with her."

"Are you sure you are acting wisely in taking a stranger into your house in this way?" Mrs. Peyton asked Madie, a trifle anxious at her lack of worldliness.

"We are willing to take her on trust, and I am sure it will not be betrayed."

"I should not have interfered at all, had your mother been here."

"I understand, Mrs. Peyton, and appreciate your watchful care, but I have faith in our new friend."

Mrs. Crowan came in and confirmed Madie's opinion. "She is real nice, I know; I must have something made in

style, right away. I've gone looking shabby long enough. I never have heard anything against her, and that is in the favor of any woman alone in the world! If I had heard it, I shouldn't have believed it. No use in getting at it and telling of every blamed thing you hear. It always makes me mad to listen to a whole lot of gabbling folks. They ain't so valuable as geese, for they never will be a comfort to anyone, no matter how fine their feathers are. Unless a person is wanting in all finer feeling, he ain't a going to find fault with anyone, before a friend, and unless he's malicious, he won't before a foe." Mrs. Crowan had gone right on with her line of thought until she reached the end.

Madie had received a popular novel, and had reviewed it. On this Sabbath afternoon she read it aloud. "You have read it already, and it will be tiresome for you to read it again," said Miss Ripley.

"I shall enjoy it just as well this time; for all the time I shall be thinking how it will please you. I take books as a sort of appetizer for my writing. I may gather a kernel from one that will spring into an idea and 'bear an hundred fold.'"

Lilian laughed. "Then it will be charitable for us to let you go on." She nestled in an easy chair to listen.

Madie read until evening. The book and the day were finished together. The reader turned to her new friend, "Miss Lilian, you will leave us to-morrow; but remember that we all like you and will be glad for you to come back. I wondered, yesterday, if you knew how nice it was for us to come home and find you here!" The hands met in a warm, strong clasp, and another friend was added to the list of each.

A grand, mass meeting was held in the Court Yard, when the after-glow of October with its sweet, sad lights was adorning the world. Madie held the pencil idly and watched the crowd; though looking at all, there were many faces that she did not see. As the band began playing, and the people waved hats and voices in a mighty huzza! she

came back to reality, and saw men whose names had been household words in the homes of the nation. It was difficult to curb her own enthusiasm and take down those speeches for the benefit of the *Headlight* readers. When one particularly eloquent sentence went out to that vast audience, from the lips of a man who had stood for twenty years on the floor of Congress, and spoken for principle, she dropped her pencil and cheered involuntarily.

She was surprised, on her way to the office, to see men, who were to cast their vote at the coming November election, leaning idly over bars, or sauntering leisurely along the street. "They haven't been to hear those speeches; I am actually ashamed for them!"

Mrs. Crowan came into the editorial room. "Liked it, didn't you?" she asked briskly. "Of course you did!" she went on without waiting for a reply. "I was wedged against the pillars and stood on one foot, but I never thought of being tired. How is your father?"

"Very much better when mamma wrote last."

"I believe he will get as well and strong as ever. Is Miss Ripley at your house?"

"No; she went back to her room, Monday."

"I am going to take her home with me. I have got plenty of work ready for her." Madie directed her to Lilian and went back to her work.

"I wonder what she is going to have made?" Aggie queried, half to herself and half to her friends.

"She is just doing this through her broad kindness, to help Miss Lilian along," said Christa confidently, and she was right. But out of this desire came an idea which developed into a plan, and the plan was finally completed.

They were getting up a benefit for the family of a man who was injured on the railroad. The committee visited our editors. Madie took out her purse. "I will give all I can, but I fear it will not be a very great help."

"Very kind of you, I am sure," said one of the ladies with a bow and smile.

"I really expected more than that. I cannot see any

need of such penuriousness," she said to her companions as they went down the stairs. Madie heard every word through the open transom. Christa saw her lips quiver.

"Never mind, Madie; we can manage without her good opinion. We all appreciate you, and God knows that you are generous, and loving, and kind. This man's daughters are as able to work as you or I. Mrs. Leith said last night that she 'did na see any use in their being so daft as to sit and greet owre their trouble, when they could just as weel gang to work and lessen it doon!'"

"It is weak in me to care. I will try and not mind it any longer."

"I see the rainbow of promise in your eyes, now! I am glad the clouds are breaking away." Christa stooped and kissed her sister and went back to her work. She had a sadness of her own to conquer. Robert had asked, a few evenings before: "How long are you going to keep me waiting?"

"I don't know, Robert," she had answered.

"I am a patient man, but it is hard for me to see you working along day after day, and you will not accept assistance from me."

"Robert, do not blame me. You cannot understand, or you would not."

"I understand, and love you all the more. I shall wait for you four years longer; I have already waited three. When my 'seven years serving time' is ended you must promise to come to me."

"Robert, I will not bind you with any solemn promise. But if you care to come to me in four years, I will answer then."

She made a quick gesture as he stepped toward her. "You do not know what my answer will be. I will not permit you to say anything more."

"Remember Christabel Burton, that it is not *quite* four years that I shall have to wait; and I shall not be put off with either argument or pleadings, when the time expires."

He had not been at home for several days, having been called away on business.

"Christa is so solemn! I wonder if it is because of Robert's absence," Madie questioned herself, many times, in the days that followed.

"To-day has been just a cipher," said the junior editor, throwing herself back on the couch, and speaking almost petulantly. "I have had no new ideas; no new work; and no glamour of enthusiasm to freshen up the old work. I have worked to day, because the preceding days have taught me to do so. If I had never worked before, there would not have been originality enough, about either myself or the day, to have caused me to start in this morning. It brought no impulses with it; nothing to make it remembered above other days. There had to come twenty-four hours between yesterday and to-morrow; and so this was thrown in. I believe I am like the day; simply placed here to fill up a vacuum."

"I think that is all any of us are here for, to occupy our niche, and to carry out a single one of God's ideas," said Robert, coming in with Josie, who had been spending an hour at Mrs. Peyton's. Christa had thought that perhaps Robert might discontinue his visits. The world was rose-colored again, when he entered and answered her thoughts in his strong, calm manner.

Madie had been reading a letter from Jean Cragie. She smiled at Robert when he had spoken, and said: "I should like to read a portion of my letter. I think that the news will be as gratifying to Christa as to myself:

"I know your time must be fully occupied, and I am going to make a proposal. I have found someone to fill my place here. I want to find a quiet home for a year, and would like to come to you, to be one of you, and to do as you do. Let these four seasons ring their changes for us, all together."

"She will be a grand addition to your home and staff."

"Yes, Robert; I fear we could not have continued alone much longer. Jean will know just what to do. This sudden desire for rest is prompted by her loving wish to

help me. Papa and mamma must know of this." She gathered her writing material together, for a long visit with her parents, humming an old air as she did so. They had not seen her so happy for months. "She will be here New Years. Only two months to wait," she said, resting her pen for a moment, in its rapid progress over the paper.

"I am glad, because you are glad," said Robert, speaking only a part of his thoughts. "I will be able to see more of Christa, if she is not so busy," was his mental reflection.

Madie finished her letter, and again began to speak of her friend. "I can appear a great deal better and talk more easily before Jean than before any other except Christa and mamma, and possibly Phil and Ralph"—she stopped. How long a time it had been since she had mentioned the latter's name before any but her own people!

Christa gathered together the broken threads of her sister's thoughts. "I like what 'the country parson' has written on this subject:

"'When with people who think you clever and wise, you really are a good deal cleverer and wiser than usual; while with people who think you stupid and silly, you find yourself under a malign influence which tends to make you actually so for the time.'"

"Thank you, for the quotation!" and Madie went to help her brothers with their lessons. Robert lingered for a good word with Christa.

"What is the programme for to-morrow?" the younger sister asked of the elder, when she joined her in the back parlor which was used as a study.

"The county fair in the morning. Mamma's last letter to be published. A local for Lilian, who will be back in her rooms next week. The general election notice and the programme of the teacher's institute." Christa put her hands to her ears.

Bert looked up from his philosophy, where he was trying to study acoustics, finding it difficult to separate the theory from the practice around him.

"You will have very little to fill your paper to-morrow, Mai. Would you like an original poem from me?"

"Herbert Burton your lessons must be attended to." Madie assumed her teacher's frown as she spoke.

"I think I have them, Miss Madeline."

"Very well, stand and recite."

He gave his lesson with original variations and comments. "I don't think I have confined myself strictly to the text, but Prof Pearce wishes us to be independent of the printed matter."

"You must adhere to the *truth* of the text at least," she returned, as she handed the book back to him.

Christa visited the fair in the morning, in company with Robert and Aggie. The former never failed to get away from the bank on the day that Christa was away from the office. "I don't see any use in going to the fair every year. There is such a sameness about them. Squashes—mammoth, of course—and every other vegetable displayed in its hughest dimensions. I never see such anywhere but at our agricultural exhibitions, and I have wondered if nature did not manufacture them for the occasion, just as women and girls work for months to make a fine display of fancy work," said Christa.

"And people have a regular *fair* look. There's the man talking and performing with bees. Hear that crier for the side show! I do not see how anything that is not run by steam can go on from morning until night as he does. And there is the advertising wagon of a theatrical troupe "every night, at the opera house." Aggie paused for breath.

"You haven't mentioned the circular swing, nor the booths, nor the peanut and lemonade stands."

"Because you didn't give me time, Christa. That man is mad because he didn't get a premium; that woman is watching the judges, and *they* look as pompous as ever. I meet people that I haven't seen for a long time; if I want to talk with them, I am prevented by the thought that they haven't been through all the buildings, and I

am trespassing on their time; this makes me stutter and stammer, and it takes me twice as long to say anything as it would if I were not in a hurry. All the time they stand on the bias as if they wanted to be polite, but really must leave."

"You and Christa had better write this up together. I am sure you will not omit anything then," said Robert.

"'Forty varieties of jelly,'" Christa reads from a card. "That woman must have some originality about her. We will go to see the fine art exhibits. We have not seen the feather, and wax, and hair flowers, nor the rugs, nor machine stitching, and 'ye editor' must be impartial. 'A silk quilt, crazy-work, and four thousand pieces,' by a woman who would have 'no time to avail herself of the right of franchise, if she were permitted to do so.' This work proves that a few people in this western country have found something besides the 'weary grind of toil.' Our days are made up of odd pieces, like that quilt. Mine haven't been put together with fancy stitches every time. Let us go and see the live stock, now." Christa's fund of humor seemed inexhaustible, and both she and Robert were quite happy.

They visit the poultry, sheep and swine. "Look, there are hogs with auburn hair," said Aggie.

"Those are Jersey reds," said her brother.

"They look like a respectable hog badly scorched."

They drive past stalls of sleek-looking cattle, ruminating proudly—with a blue ribbon, or red, or white, or with none at all, it made no difference—they seemed equally aware of the attention given. "I would I were a Rosa Bonheur," said Christa.

"See those lovely horses! What an aristocratic nose that black one has! Robert, if you love your sister, do not drive to see the mules. My enthusiasm will leave me." Robert laughed and drove back to the track.

"I cannot stop for more than one race; Madie will be waiting for my notes, I am afraid." Their sympathies were largely drawn upon by the appearance of a blind horse upon the track. "How I do want him to win, so

that he can have some good times yet," said Christa eagerly.

He easily won the first heat, but did not have "bottom enough to hold out," the jockeys said.

"I am so sorry for him, that I have lost interest in the other races," said Aggie.

"Isn't it awfully jolly?" Bert and Benjie ask, as they come to the carriage, fully enjoying their half holiday.

"*'Awe—fully jolly,'*" repeated Aggie, looking at them with a stern mouth, though her eyes were full of mischief.

"Yes, indeed."

"Oh, boys, how you do mix up the English language."

"Aren't you going to stay all the afternoon?"

"No, boys; I must go back to Madie. She is all alone with her work, and Josie will be tired. She insisted that I should come; I suppose because she thought I would enjoy it. It is easy to be selfish with her, for she never obtrudes her own interests and wishes upon any other."

"She shall ride Leon to-night."

"I am afraid it would make her sad to have you offer him to her."

"I will try to offer him to her in such a way that it will neither make her sensitive nor sad."

Madie did accept the loan of the horse. "It made me feel sad, I acknowledge; but Leon knows me still, and I could not refuse Robert's brotherly kindness." She spoke unintentionally, and did not notice what she had said, until she saw Christa's conscious and Robert's exultant look.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MRS. CROWAN TAKES A TRIP.

Mrs. Crowan had decided that she was going to take a trip. "I am bound to have my daughters go along. John can go next summer, after planting, and see his brother in Vermont, and that will take a good deal longer than it will for me to make my journey. I got my clothes made. I didn't know until I had started in, just when I was coming out with that thought, but it's going to take me beyond Chicago, for the clothes and I will all be older agin another year. I haven't seen much to speak of. To be sure, we moved out here, but it would take the observinest kind of a person to get much pleasure under a covered wagon and a sunbonnet, especially if she's behind a yoke of oxen, with a baby in her arms. The miles seemed to pull back away from us, and if I hadn't had the oxen continually before me to teach me patience; John would never recall the trip with pleasure.

"I believe I'll learn a good deal. Anyway, I am going, and so be the girls. We shall visit a cousin of mine, but we sha'n't stay there long. I ain't a starting out with the idea of visiting anyone in particular. There is lots of folks in this world that I never expect to call by name, but I'd like to see some of the faces that are looking out toward eternity the same century I am. My clothes is fixed so they won't make folks laugh, and then again they ain't fixed up so fancy that they will have to inconvenience themselves in turning around to see how they are made.

"Mattie and Alice are like their father, sensible and quiet, so I guess we will get along. I never rode on the cars in my life; but other folks have done it, and—like everything else—some have lived through it and some haven't, and I am going to try it. To live in an age of

improvements and not profit by 'em is a kind of thankless way to do, I think."

Madie, Christa, Aggie and Robert urged her not to abandon her project, and each sent many a pleasant wish along with her.

She was a positive entertainment to the people around her. Nothing escaped her eye. Although she made no remarks to any save her daughters, those in the seats near, heard and were interested.

"I want to get some souvenirs from the city and lake," said Mattie.

"I'm getting them all the time, and learning lots of lessons besides. There's a better lesson in patience than the one I learned from our oxen. See that man! His face is about as pleasant to look at as a cross-cut saw, and that wife of his is actually smiling after living all these years with him! She either has wonderful control of her feelings or else she hasn't got any to control, but there is too much in her face to make me believe that the last is true."

A woman directly in front of her sat for a hundred miles and never turned her face toward the window. "There would be small satisfaction in making a world, if everybody paid as little attention to it as she does!"

We will give her "Thinks" on this journey as they appeared in the *Headlight*:

"I have been traveling, and presume I shall be for days yet, though I am at home again. I never knew how much joy and sorrow, love and hate, and dread and expectation, in fact, how much of *real life* could be crowded into a few days, until I took a trip on a railroad train. I feel that I thoroughly understand the political situation, because the man across the aisle seemed to be rehearsing for a campaign speech.

People work awful hard to rest and have a good time. There was a couple on the train that had been hunting for enjoyment ever since they left California, and the poor things hadn't found it yet, but they still had a determined look. The woman told me that they were out for pleas-

ure. I didn't say nothing, but I thought that if I had got out as far as they had, I should begin to want to see a little. She said, too, that they was going to Hell Gate. I wasn't such a fool that I didn't know what she meant, but I wanted to say that I should think she would be more apt to find pleasure if she went back to the gate she started from. If they had been a mind to, they could have found real, solid comfort in every car they got into.

Some of the folks fidgetted, and laid down, and sat up, and acted as if the conductor had come aboard that train on purpose to have a visit with them. Some trusted to luck, and they were the happiest.

The rose and the thorn gatherers were well represented. I like to say a good word for the thorns. If they are kind of sharp, they often amount to the most. Folks ain't like roses—they ain't made just to look at. I've been real glad lots of times that I had my polonay made plain. I tried to pick out a friend, and I found one; a real nice old lady. She was pleasant to everyone. I know she had felt the need of kindness sometime herself. When I pick a friend I want one that has felt pain. I don't care for any novice in suffering to listen to my trials.

But I didn't give all my attention to my traveling companions. The world came toward me so fast that I could not take my eyes from the window, for long at a time. It seemed to me that the world grew broader every minute. I don't wonder that folks used to think it was flat, when they could only travel so slowly, and it kept widening out as they went along.

We saw laborers in the fields who stopped and looked at the train, then turned to the plow or whatever work they was a doing, and I thought how many times I had been working hard and seen folks pleasuring and said: 'Well, one half of the world works and the other half plays.' Now here I am enjoying the other half! I shall swing back into work again, but I shall always remember the glad feeling I had when the rope swung out the other way, and I was free from care for a while. I was

bound not to worry about anything and lived out a straight happy thought from childhood until now. The power of speech left me and I didn't hear a word around me, nor I was not hungry. I had just two senses, seeing and feeling; one for the body and the other for the soul. The train stopped at a little lake, with a wicked name and an imperishable wall; where the pine trees stood up tall, and stately, and grim, and some poplar trees were still hanging on to their leaves and dancing and bending in the breeze, when the season had already given notice for 'em to quit. I didn't care to eat my luncheon, then; so I just climbed upon the gray rocks and sat down and buried myself under a cover of thick thought. Way up on the rocks a figure would come out and stand motionless for a while, and I knew there must be a party of 'em somewhere; they would get together again and then separate. Just as I was beginning to have a real nice time in the silence, the train whistled and I had to leave.

We reached Chicago in a few hours. The noise bothered me and I walked so slow that I got in everybody's way; but I got as lively as any of 'em before I had been there long. We went to the parks, and the monuments, and the stores, and the lake. We was awful tired every night, but went a sight-seeing again in the morning. Everybody was just as good to us as could be.

We went on down into the country and the rain beat against the windows all the way. I felt kind o' shamed, when I got there, for all of us to go a *cousining* around in that way. But we concluded to make the best of it, so we took a bus and went right down there. I felt more foolish all the time! Jane met us at the door, and she just acted as if it was the nicest thing in the world to have three women come to visit her, and the best time for 'em to come was in the fall when it was raining just as hard as it could pour. I've been obliged to her ever since.

We went on to see another friend, and had to take a freight train coming back. It moved along so slowly; at each station it backed up one track and down another; I couldn't see any earthly reason why; only that it made

kind of a show of business. Someway, that freight engine, backing up and down in such an aimless way, reminded me of folks who have mistaken their calling, and are capable of better things than they are doing. Maybe it is because I don't understand the motive of either.

A young man, who was a passenger like ourselves, affected a careless indifference of all around him. At each depot he'd get off and sit on the platform, and didn't seem to care whether he went on that train or another, and finally he did *get left*. There is so much slang used, now-a-days, that you can hardly express yourself briefly and not seem to use it, whether you mean to or not.

The homeward trip was a bright one and we had a good time, being both glad to go and to return. It was all such a great, beautiful thing—this journey—and I thought to build a great big house of thought for my memory of it to dwell in, but here I have only the bare frame work! I can put no cornice of eloquence on it, nor twine no vines of poetry or fancy around it. It is a building that stands right out where I can see it all the days of my life, if the reader can't."

"Who was the handsomest man that you saw while you were away from home?" Aggie asked, mischievously.

"John Crowan, standing on the depot platform when the train steamed into Clayton," was the prompt answer.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

GOOD WORDS.

"Oh, dear!" said Madie, with a sigh. "Court sits to-morrow, and I positively dread it. I am perfectly willing to publish the civil cases; but our readers, unless it is someone who is especially interested, do not care to read those. They have a morbid curiosity for murder and scandal, and the slime and vileness of a criminal calendar.

"I shall only give each a brief notice, unless it be something that our readers will profit by reading, or in favor of a man's innocence. The judge, jury and witnesses will know all, and the outside world what it seemeth best to tell them.

"I will not publish the proceedings of a suit that will cause any honest wife, mother, sister or friend to blush as she reads it. When ladies are ordered to leave a courtroom before a testimony is given, I do not propose to serve it up to them in our evening paper, to pollute their own homes."

So these cases were only casually mentioned, while others were carried out in full.

Clear and impartial, but leaning always to the side of mercy, the *Headlight* editorials gleamed out and lighted the track of Right for miles ahead. The subscribers saw, and many appreciated.

"One thing I notice about the *Headlight*, it doesn't jumble its headlines together. The editors do not put a death and a gambling raid in almost the same sentence. I picked up a paper the other day, and the headings read about in this style:

'A JAIL BIRD ESCAPES—A PICKPOCKET CAPTURED—OUR NINE COMPLETELY DONE UP—SENTENCED TO THIRTY DAYS IN THE 'COOLER'—GONE TO DWELL WITH THE ANGELS—COMICALITIES, ETC.'

"It must have been soothing to the parents of that young lady to have seen her obituary classed in with rogues and criminals, and followed by slang witticisms!"

The speaker was standing on the street, talking to a friend; a little woman in black tripped past, and nodded pleasantly to the gentleman who had been listening.

"Who is that?" enquired the first gentleman.

His friend laughed, "'Not to know her, etc.,' that is the managing editor of the paper that you have just been complimenting."

"So young as that?"

"Yes; she can't be more than twenty-four, or at the most twenty-five, years of age."

"I am astonished!"

"You would be more surprised if you knew all that girl has done. She is more mature in thought than most men of thirty. Miss Burton has a real love for her work, is talented and energetic, and is as conscientious as only a true woman can be. Taking all this into consideration, can you see any good reason why she should not succeed?"

"No, I think not."

"Her father was thought to be in the first stages of consumption, and was ordered to the mountains; his wife went with him, and the two eldest girls oversee the house and have charge of that paper."

"Burton was a sound man. I knew him slightly. I presume he dictates a good many of the editorials now." The best editorials, most of them written by Madie herself, were invariably attributed to her father or some gentleman friend.

Madie was often hurt by the way some of her former schoolmates met her in society. They seemed to expect her to grow important with this new responsibility. "Why won't they be friendly?" she asked of her sister. "A snub is a very durable article, but I can see no use in giving one. I do not have any idea of it, myself. It is nice to change my route between home and the office.

The walk is not so monotonous. I meet many people and get many new ideas, but the girls all act as if it were an effort to be friendly with me."

While Madie was talking, a young lady of the city was in conversation with Aggie Peyton upon the same subject. "She acts as common as anyone, but she is spoken of and mentioned so much that I presume she feels as if she were my superior."

Aggie spoke quickly. "It is only the shallow minds and light-heads that are easily turned. Madie has too much common sense to be spoiled by a little flattery."

"I almost agree with you. I used to like her very much, and she is doing a splendid work now. I wish I could help her. They are so busy that I always feel as if I were intruding. If she is as conscious of her noble efforts as other people are, I don't see how she can help being vain."

"Because she has the will and the brain to do the work, she has the solidity not to be giddy over it. If you want to be a real, friendly helper, why don't you run right up into the office and talk, when they stop to rest for a minute, or go to the house some evening when their work is done? Don't go for a call, but just for a friendly talk, and you will get it."

"I will do so, Aggie. Your honest words of friendship have made me wish to renew our old acquaintance."

When this young lady took the initiative others soon followed, and our girls were looking forward to a winter of pleasant social intercourse.

A new book, which was making quite a stir in the literary world, was sent to Madie to review, through the advice of her old employer. "I think that is quite a compliment to you," said Christa; "you have a select list of new books to notice every week or two."

Madie read the book carefully. The heroine was one of those odd, sensitive characters, a combination of many of the finer qualities of a woman and the courage and strength of a man. She had stood between her lover and

danger a number of times, and ruled her coarse associates by the force of her superior intellect and will power.

"Well, what do you think?" asked Christa, when she laid the book aside.

"It is an interesting story. I believe, however, that a person would like such a woman better in a book than in real life, because in a book she is thoroughly explained, and before people she would be apt to be misunderstood."

"A novelist is a very daring person! He reveals secret thoughts and fancies as no other one could possibly do. I doubt if we could explain ourselves as a writer of fiction would explain us," said Christa thoughtfully.

"And I presume these same writers of fictions could explain your motives and thoughts even more readily than they could their own, Christa. I cannot say that this book is true to life. It may be true to an exceptional life."

"How dare you criticise those authors as you do?" Miss Ripley asked. "I should hardly think myself capable," she added, with so much wonder and doubt in her voice that Madie knew she was not chiding her, but had really asked a question, the answer of which would be like a solution of a puzzling thought.

"I give my opinion, Lilian, because it is asked. I prefer to reach up instead of down, and in my criticism I take something better than I could do myself. If I did not I would be patronizing an inferior effort. We cannot expect a perfect work from an imperfect mortal."

"I accept your reasons, my dear friend," said Lilian. "I knew you would have some good ones. Mother is coming next week, and the thought of having her with me again makes me so happy that I cannot think of anything else for long at a time."

"Mother is coming next week!" That sentence haunted Madie all day in the office. "How slowly the months creep along. But it will be better after Jean comes."

"We will busy ourselves in preparing a box for them," said Christa.

"Oh, isn't it too bad?" exclaimed Benjie; "we will have to split our Christmas in two again, and have half in Colorado and half here; I wonder when we can have a whole one?"

"Next year, I hope," said Madie, bending over the box. Josie brought a picture-book, some cards, a whistle, and an armless doll: "Them's my presents for my own darling papa and mamma, and here's some hazel nuts that the boys and I gathered at Mr. Crowan's last summer."

"Thank you, darling. Papa and mamma will both be glad to get your presents."

"I say, Madie, are you going to send doll and whistle just as she put them in?"

"Yes, Bert, they will be as pleased with those as anything we could send. She expects it, and I couldn't disappoint her; neither will I deceive her, and pretend to send what I have not. We will each write a letter, and you boys must see that the box goes to-day."

On Christmas they received a package containing a gift for each one, with "mamma's and papa's love," written on each. As Christa turned the leaves of her book a note fluttered to the floor.

"May God bless all my dear ones! It seems selfish to stay away from you so long, but it is best. If I can bring your papa back to you, well and strong as he once was, we can smile at this absence, in the years to come, when we are all together, with no 'vacant chair' in our midst. I know you can spare both of us better for a year than you could *one* for all time.

YOUR LOVING MAMMA."

And signed just below her name was:

"Your affectionate father,

FRANK BURTON."

Written in the dear handwriting that the older children so well remembered. Mr. Burton had dictated many letters to his family and to the newspaper, but had written very little himself, as the effort was wearying.

"Dear papa," said Christa, "this is one of our best Christmas gifts."

Josie reached her chubby hands upward and pulled the letter down where she could see it. "My stars! so it is papa's writing, just as nat'chill as nat'chill can be."

"You little roley-poley, as if you could remember," said Benjie, laughing.

"I most ashoredly do remember my own papa's hand that he writed with hisself." She was so satisfied with her knowledge and memory that they did not try to enlighten her further.

Madie received a long letter from Ralph. She read it a second time before she gave any of its contents to the others. She looked up to meet Christa's enquiring gaze. "He says that papa was quite poorly for a few days, but is better again; that he will be glad to assist us in any way that he can. He is working hard, I should judge, from his letter; but here it is. Read it yourself."

Christa noted one or two sentences that Madie had not spoken of; one: "I get lonely and discouraged sometimes, Madie; but I think of your grand work, and am ashamed of my weakness." Another: "I should like to talk with all of you, and above all, there is much that I wish to say to you. Please not to discontinue your friendly letters."

Madie had had a motive in handing the letter to Christa. "I will see if she sees anything more than friendship in it; if she does, I think she will speak of it, and I shall then stop the correspondence."

Christa, however, made no comment, but silently returned the letter.

Madie seeing that she was still to be left in the dark, asked timidly, "Shall I answer the letter, Christa?"

"Of course—why not? Your letters will be nice for him, and his for you. He is such an old friend, Madie!"

So the correspondence was continued as before.

"What a hypocrite I am," thought Christa.

"How foolish I was to think Ralph was growing sentimental," commented Madie. She had no thought of displacing Douglas.

"Now all men besides are to me but shadows,
Douglas! Douglas! tender and true,"

was the refrain oftenest on her lips.

The year was rapidly leaving them, and in a few days the New Year was coming, bringing Jean Cragie with it, to stay until its close.

CHAPTER XL.

HAPPINESS PASSED AROUND.

Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Burton and Carrie had talked it over, and decided in family conclave that, as Christmas was to be Carrie's wedding day, Ray and Phil should not only be urged, but positively entreated, to come home and spend a few quiet weeks with them before that time. "I wish Madie and Christa could be with me then, yet I know they cannot leave their home and work. I shall be married in church, but I am not going to have a grand reception. I do want you boys to come home, that we may have the quiet home feeling altogether once more;" so Carrie wrote to each of her brothers.

Ray came home the 1st of December. "I shall go and see Phil and bring him back with me in a few days," he announced the second morning after his arrival. "If I should want to bring another friend with me, I could have that privilege, I suppose, couldn't I," he asked, hesitatingly.

"Of course, my boy. Bring her right along," said his mother, with a loving smile.

Ray laughed at her quick interpretation of his thoughts, and the afternoon found him *en route* for the city.

Phil was busy as usual; but he found time to tease his brother, and coax, and compliment him, as in the days when they were boys together.

"Ray, you can drive with me, and act as post while I am making my calls this morning."

"Thank you for the honor conferred! I think I shall visit our friends."

"Do as you please, Ray, but you must prepare for a long talk to-night."

Phil had been unexpectedly called to that portion of

the city where Miss Cragie boarded, and called to tell her of his brother's visit. He had guessed at a correspondence between them, as he had not forgotten his brother's admiration for her. Jean was not at all deceitful, and never appeared surprised at any information of Ray's doings or whereabouts. Her evident effort to appear unconcerned, when apprised by Phil of his brother's nearness, proved to the keen-eyed man that his suppositions had been correct. "Glad I told her before he came upon her unawares! She is a girl that would dislike to make any sudden betrayal of her feelings."

The door bell rang and Ray was ushered into the reception-room. During the two years' correspondence, many frank, friendly letters had been written by both. In the past few months Ray's letters had become more tender in their tone, and each felt that the other was more than a casual acquaintance. Ray had been thinking for months what he would say to this girl when he met her. How she would look at him and welcome him! But the dream was not at all like the reality. He felt all his self-possession deserting him.

"I meant to get away before he came," thought Phil, pitying the embarrassment of each.

"It is a beautiful morning," said Ray. Then thought: "What an idiotic speech that was!"

"For a polar bear or an esquimaux, but hardly for us, as it is 18 deg. below at present, I believe." With a gay "good morning," Phil left them.

I think Ray must have recovered from his diffidence, for he spent nearly all the morning with Miss Cragie, and was forced to exercise a large amount of self-denial to leave when he did. Yet he had not said that which was uppermost in his mind.

"I thought I understood him, of all men; but I must have been mistaken. I shall be with Madie in a little while, and I am sure that I know her. Some people I fail to understand, not because their nature is too deep, but because it is not deep enough. I keep vibrating between what they are and what I expect of them. I

hope Mr. Burton does not belong to this class," mused Jean.

On the whole, it had not been a satisfactory call.

Ray was even more quiet than usual, and sat with his brother for nearly an hour that evening, never saying a word.

"If it were not for you, Ray, I honestly believe this would be a lonely evening for me," said Phil solemnly. "If you wish to confide in me any more, please be as brief as possible; the hour is getting late."

No answer from Ray, who was apparently "at home in his own thoughts."

"I have thought of that before; I am sure of it, now," Phil continued, looking into the glowing coals.

"Did you shop any to-day?"

"No," shortly.

"Speaks simple English, but not in the pleasantest manner. Did you have a pleasant call this morning?" making a foot rest of the stand.

"Quite."

"Well, that is an enthusiastic view of the case! I never call on Jean Cragie without enjoying it very much."

"You call often, I presume."

"Yes, I claim no better friend in the city." Phil crossed his hands behind his head and looked at his brother through half closed lids.

Ray at that moment was experiencing the first jealousy he had ever known.

"The man that wins Jean Cragie will get more than an equal, and he ought to be a very happy person," said Phil, with a sigh meant to be both sentimental and forlorn. Ray stood motionless before the grate, still watching the coals, and seeing many bright visions in their warmth and light, but they were more unreal and shadowy than they had been. If Phil had not seen Miss Cragie's conscious look that morning, and the meeting between her and Ray, he would not have teased his brother to-night. "No use of their being so superlatively happy. I must mix up a

homeopathic dose of bitter with so much sweet. It isn't good for anyone and I only give about the thirtieth trituration. I am of the *regular school*, and am confident that it won't hurt him. Musing aloud, he continued: "I went, not shopping but just looking with an eye single to a final purchase. The solitaires are lovely. By the way, have you ever noticed what a beautiful hand Jean Cragie has?"

"I believe, Phil, if you have no objections, I shall retire."

"No objections at all, Ray, but a little surprised and—well—I might say hurt, that you should not care to talk with me."

Ray paid no attention to the remark, and Phil, when he lighted the gas, was remorseful to see how troubled he looked. "What a contemptible thing it was, anyway! I have been a poor David for my Jonathan, but I will atone."

Lying beside his brother he resolved to make amends. "I have bothered him enough and it is better that he should rest to-night." He put his hand on his brother's shoulder. "Ray."

"Well?"

"It isn't well at all. I have been tormenting you."

"In what way?"

"About Jean. We are simply good friends. If I really cared for a woman I should be brave enough to ask her if she cared for me."

"Perhaps she does."

"Ray, you are a real smart man, but I am beginning to believe that you haven't good, common sense."

Ray did not find it a difficult matter to understand this doubtful compliment, for he knew that back of it lay the hint of a great joy. "Perhaps I may improve," he said dryly.

Miss Cragie received a second call from Ray, and was touched by his simple, manly avowal. "Jean, I have come to tell you that I love you. Will you be 'my ain Jean?'"

"Yes," she answered, as simply as he had asked her.

"I believe you'll be 'leal and true, Jean.'" The girl, who

had been homeless so long, found a haven in the great loyal heart she was leaning upon. "We'll baith walk thegither 'to the land o' the leal,'" said Ray, with solemn tenderness.

Such a scene is too sacred for us to intrude upon, so we leave them in their great joy, which, in its solemn intensity, is the nearest approach to a great sorrow.

Phil was quick to notice Ray's happy expression. "The air of the city seems to agree with you."

"I have made a purchase and a gift," said Ray, irrelevant of Phil's remark.

"I can imagine what it was. I hope you didn't give yourself away, too."

"Now, Phil, you are too bad."

"I never have been fully appreciated by my own people. If I, in my zeal, overrate myself, the family are to blame for it. No one knows what I have suffered from unsympathizing relatives. It has been such hard work to keep cheerful, that I have just worn myself out, trying to make *me* have a nice time. How much I have done for you in this matter. Sung your praises to her, and got your courage up, so that you could ask the momentous question! I feel as if I looked exactly like the old pictures of fairy god-mothers, in the nursery books. You'll take her away. If Carrie were not coming here to live, I should be entirely alone in the world with no amusement except Aunt Sarah."

Jean had promised to attend Carrie's wedding. "But I shall not go with you. I want to stop and think it all over," she said with a bright smile.

"I have 'thought it all over' so many times, and I only wake to find the dream a reality more blessed still," said Ray, smiling back at her.

"Will you go to the cemetery with us? I know Madie would like to have me go, before I go to her."

"Yes; I will go. But why need you go to her, Jean? I want you immediately."

"No, Ray; I have promised Madie, and am anxious to get out of the whirl and bustle of the city, and help her for a twelve month. Then you can come for me. You

must go home without me, you and Phil, and have your unbroken family together for a few days. You can 'prepare them for the worst' as Phil says. And when 'the worst' comes they will not be surprised."

They went to the chapel, and out to the "narrow home" of Douglas McLean. The plain marble shaft with his name upon it, and beneath it chiseled in the pure surface:

"Thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord."

Jean hung a wreath of evergreen, with white and scarlet berries intertwined, upon the monument.

"He must have been a very good, unselfish man to have given up all thought of self, and worked as he did," said Ray.

"He was," said Jean briefly, as she turned away.

Carrie Burton was going to marry Phil's partner, a thorough-going, elderly man, domestic in his tastes, who had buried his wife a few years before, and had deeply mourned for her. He had never thought to ask another to fill the vacant place in his home. Phil's sister, quiet and sensible, had been the recipient of kindly attentions from him ever since her first visit to the city. Then he began to miss the pleasant smile and earnest words of the girl whose youth stood before him in vivid contrast to his own two score and ten years.

"I never can call back those dead years, and she can not come toward me any faster; there will always be a quarter of a century between us," he reasoned, and tried vainly to forget her, and finally concluded to do the most sensible thing he could do under the circumstances—ask her opinion on the subject, and was happily surprised to find that she did not care for those vanished years, and she did care for him.

When he learned that Phil wished to go home for a few days, but hesitated because of leaving him, he said, heartily: "Go on! I shall get along finely, and shall only come the day before. I should be in the way now. I shall soon have Carrie with me for always, so I can

afford to work alone for a few days longer. Miss Cragie and I will invade your domestic circle soon enough. I shall be pleased to escort her to your home." So the brothers went home alone.

Aunt Prue laughed and cried; this giving up of her daughter was a real grief to her. But she was happy in having "the children all at home" for a little while.

"Carrie has always been a home girl. She will have a broad field for labor, with Dr. Gerald's twin boys and the little girl. They are unusually good children, and I know she will get along nicely with them, unless the whole neighborhood try to help her; that always makes extra work. The Doctor is a sensible man, and thinks she is as near perfection as can be. So I feel as if my sister were going to a happy home." Phil delivered this speech to his brother and parents, shortly after his arrival at home.

Aunt Prue was as pleased with the announcement of Ray's engagement as a mother could be expected to be when she hears that some other one is to stand first in her son's affections. She remembered Miss Cragie. "I think she is a woman that we shall all love and admire as much in ten years from now as we do to-day." Jean was received affectionately by the whole family.

The wedding passed off with the usual tears and smiles. The three children looked with admiration at their new mother. Phil's face had lost its merry smile, and he congratulated his sister soberly.

"It was proper for them to be married Christmas, for I never saw more of 'peace and good will' at any wedding," said Jean.

Phil had drawn Jean aside ere he took his departure. "Tell Madie and Christa that I am proud of them, and of the boys, too. In Aggie Peyton I think you will find a warm friend." He was looking out of the window, as he spoke, and Miss Cragie could not catch the expression of his eye. "Tell Madie that Aunt Sarah often quotes her as a marvel of wisdom, and says 'my niece Madeline' quite often. She is as ready to acknowledge success

and denounce failure, as the world in which she moves."

"I will give your messages; good-by, Phil," said Jean.

The little family, with Phil, returned to their home. In all that city there could be found no happier couple. Carrie's house was a marvel of neatness, and she was content in the love of her husband and his little ones.

Jean and Ray stayed a few days longer at the old home, and left together. They arrived in Clayton New Years Day. Madie and Christa gave both an enthusiastic reception.

"It seems as if time were turned backward for a time, having you with us."

"For a whole year, Madie. Isn't it grand?" asked Jean.

But Madie had caught Ray's expression as he looked at her friend, and she knew that these glances were only the preface to a story. Her voice was not quite as jubilant as before when she answered, "Very grand, Jean."

When they were alone together Jean told of her plans for the future.

"I guessed it," said Madie; "you are going to leave your girlhood behind you. I cannot separate a sort of dead and gone feeling from the knowledge that a near friend is soon to enter matrimony. I shall have to give up my Jean, and, although I know Ray is a worthy man, I cannot rejoice quite yet. This is the point where our paths diverge, and they will grow wider and wider apart. Our interests have heretofore been girlish interests; hereafter they will run in different channels and will never be tributary to each other again."

"Why, Madie, are you sorry?"

"No, dear; I shall be glad for you to have a home and someone to love you as you deserve to be loved. It is going to be, and when the fact is firmly fixed upon my mind, I shall realize and accept."

Miss Cragie remembered her own feelings when she had heard of Madie's engagement, and readily sympathized with her now. "The 'going to be' is a year

ahead. Remember that, Madie, and how grandly we are going to work together."

When Ray had gone, Jean took her position on the *Headlight* staff. "I hate office work, but I do like reporting. Madie enjoys the editorial work. So we will each have a pleasant niche to fill."

Christa had more time to devote to her own plans. "She is of great assistance to me, I can assure you," Mr. Raynor cheerfully acknowledged. "I tell her that I want to plan a house for a family, and about how much I want it to cost; and she usually says, 'Let me see where you are going to put it; or, tell me a little about the tastes of the family.' Then she goes to work and draws building and rooms in such an attractive way that they take every time."

In the spring Christa's plan for the new church was accepted.

"How do you do it?" asked Aggie one day.

"I draw my ideal building, and then I come down to reality, and make my architectural plans, and the reason I succeed is because I know our city, and its people, and their tastes and needs, better than someone in New York and Boston." She was right in her statement, and had as many orders as she could fill.

"Madie, I wish you would go to the barn and look it over. I think we could rent it."

Madie, without a thought of the surprise awaiting her, complied with her sister's request. Leon stood in his old stall, apparently feeling very much at home and gave a joyful whinny as she entered. The saddle and bridle were hanging near, while harness, cutter and phaeton were put back as if they had only been taken out for a house cleaning. Madie put up her arms to caress Leon, "What does it mean, pet? I can't understand it."

There was a slip of paper fastened to the halter; she unpinned it, and held in her hands a rude sketch of two girls, a torch in the hand of the smaller one, while the larger one was holding a brush in one hand and a saw in the other; underneath were the words, "From the architect to the editor."

"Jack's Afire!" called Christa from the doorway.

Madie hugged and kissed both Leon and her sister.

"Do I come in for a share?" asked Robert.

"For a share of my honest friendship and appreciation of your kindness," said Madie extending her hand to him.

"I believe I love all of you," for the others had all gathered around Leon as the great center of attraction. "This is such a grand, sweet surprise."

"It is all Christa's doings," Robert said, glad to do her homage.

"You shall all have a ride this evening and Lilian, too; papa and mamma must know this, they will rejoice with us. Dear old Leon!" she said going back to the horse.

"Christa, darling, how happy you have made me!"

"Miss Burton, are you aware that we have a paper to issue this evening?"

"I am, Miss Cragie, and will immediately proceed to work."

"Leon looks more happy and at home here than he ever did in our stables," said Robert. He and Christa were walking behind the rest of the group toward the house. "I shall expect a gift from you, Christa; it is only three years now."

"I haven't time to talk this morning," said Christa, running into the house.

Madie thought of the pleasure she was going to give to herself and Lilian all day. She insisted that Jean, Christa and Josie should go first. After they returned she drove to Miss Ripley's room. Mrs. Ripley was entertaining another visitor when Madie went in, and sat down to wait for Lilian, who had not returned from her work.

The child talked on. In answer to Mrs. Ripley's question, she said: "No, this woman ain't my own mother. My true mother was an awful nice mother; I feel worser and worser all the time, most, and have to cry every day. Mother's death was awful, but Bill's going away was badder yet. They tell me I'm going to have consumption, but it is so awful I don't want it. I'm just well

enough, when I don't have to carry up wood and water, but this mother says its thrifty to work and I mustn't be shiftless."

Madie looked at the bent form and pinched face. "Would you like a ride?"

"Yes, ma'am; but I can't."

"I will ask your mother." She stepped lightly across the hall.

"Yes; she can go, but she can't stay long, for I have work that she's got to do."

Madie took the plainly dressed child down to the carriage and drove through the city, out to the fresh, bright country, where nature was busily employed getting her rooms ready for the spring trade. Carpets were all down, and the show windows were full of soft tints and delicate flowers.

"'Everything is clothed but the oaks, and I presume the supply of green is exhausted, or they are slow in deciding.' Miss Lilian said that last night, and I asked her where the rest of the green would come from, and she laughed and said: 'Maybe with the birds, up from the south.'"

"And you remembered it!" said Madie, surprised that the child should have noticed the fancy. "See! these upper rooms are many of them 'to let'" she said, pointing to the trees along the river.

"There'll be a heap of 'em taken, I reckon, when the birds begin their movin' on the first of May," Susie answered back with a smile. "It's awful pretty out here. Spring gets here so much quicker'en it does in town." The child drew a long breath as she spoke.

"Here I am astonished to hear her speak a word of sense. People treat children as if they had neither feeling nor common sense. I would like to make a plea for childhood, that would be heard and felt through all the land," thought Madie.

Susie's face was absolutely childish as she went back to her loveless home.

Lilian came down. "You are playing the good Samaritan to-night, I am sure,"

"I have tried to make the world brighter for 'one of the least of these.'"

"You are full of good deeds, Miss Madeline, and we all love you."

"Then I am repaid."

Lilian broke into a sweet, happy carol, and Madie joined in. "This has been a bright, happy day. Leon was given back to me this morning, and we have all enjoyed him to-night," she said, when the song had ended.

Lilian gave her a smile that was full of "thanks." "You are welcome," answered Madie, as she stopped for her friend to alight. "I shall come for your mother soon," she promised, as she turned Leon homeward.

"Jean, I have something to propose."

"I'm waiting to hear it."

"You will have a great deal of sewing to do. Will you let our little friend have it?"

"I will, certainly. I was going to ask you about her, but you have anticipated me."

"It is really too bad that Madie cannot take care of all the 'poor, and halt, and blind,'" said Aggie.

"Someone will." She thought of her letter from Ralph that day. "Your letters and papers bring me good cheer and courage. I am coming up this summer to see the busy workers." She both looked forward to and dreaded his coming, she could scarcely tell why.

They were expecting their parents, and eagerly and gladly went to work to set the house in order. "I am so anxious to see them. Life is so short it seems as if loved ones ought not to be separated. There has never been a day nor an hour that I have not thought of them."

Brothers and sisters silently agreed with Madie.

"Writing is a difficult task now, and letters seem so tame. I can read through all the words of their letters the weary waiting, the dreary homesickness, and the suffering papa has borne. But now we have only the one thought, 'they are coming home to us.'"

Robert came in with a letter. He often brought up the

late mail. "From mamma," said Christa. "Madie, take it; I dread to open it somehow!"

Madie read the brief letter:

"MY DEAR CHILDREN:

Papa tried to get well too fast, overdid, and has taken cold. The physician advised us not to go for another six months at least, but we were both so anxious. Perhaps I was more to blame than he.

"We shall have to stay now, and it may be even longer than that. I know my darlings will all be disappointed, but remember that it is hard for us to bear the separation.

"YOUR OWN MAMMA."

They all cried together, but rallied to write a cheerful letter to those who were equally disappointed.

"He will never come back," said Christa.

"I am sure he will," said Madie, bravely trying to cheer the others.

CHAPTER XLI.

AN EDITOR MAKES TWO BLUNDERS.

“And the poet, faithful and far-seeing,
Sees alike in stars and flowers a part
Of the self-same universal being,
Which is throbbing in his brain and heart.”

—Longfellow.

Lilian Ripley sat by the window, writing. A smile, sad and tender, was on her lips, and she wove it into the little rhyme she was penning. “I wish I could tell whether it is all right or not. I will not send it to Miss Burton, for she will hate to refuse it if it is not fit to publish, and I do not want her to feel obliged to print it for my sake. I will send it to the *Messenger*.”

Her name was unknown to fame, and the editor, merely glancing at it, tossed it into the waste-basket.

Timidly she essayed another, which shared the same fate.

“I thought he would surely publish that. Because it really seems to me as if it were as nice as many of the poems that I see in print.” Lilian was disappointed, but the blow was to come in the next morning’s issue.

The editor of the *Messenger* affected great contempt for ‘spring poetry,’ and in a brief editorial stated: “We do not care to have articles sent us for publication which are ‘not poetry but prose run mad.’ We wonder how long our brain will stand the pressure ere we take refuge in some lunatic asylum? People often mistake their calling, but if one has a trade we advise a continuance of that work.”—He had noticed Lilian’s name on the paper she sent him, and connected it with the modest sign that he had often read farther down the street.—“Poets are getting to be quite common, and we are gradually failing to appreciate them. Numbers overpower us.”

Jean Cragie ran up to the pleasant room, delicate as a

part of Miss Ripley herself. The little dressmaker's eyes were red and swollen. "What is the matter, Miss Lilian?"

"Nothing."

"If nothing made me feel so badly, I'd try something else. I do not want to pry into your grief; but if I can come into it and help you, I shall willingly do so."

Lilian's tears fell fast upon the work she was doing. "I wrote out some thoughts of mine in two little poems. I thought they were rather pretty, so I sent them to the *Messenger*; first one, and in a little while another; this is the article that appeared in this morning's paper."

Miss Cragie read it. "He is an old acquaintance of mine and I am almost ashamed of it to-night. He intended to be sarcastic, but he has only succeeded in being small and narrow. Why did you not send it to the *Headlight*?"

"Because I was afraid that Miss Burton would feel badly to be obliged to refuse them, lest she should hurt my feelings, and I wanted them to stand on their own merit."

"Editors are not always just. Have you a copy of your poems?" Lilian brought them to her. "I think they are good. Will you let me take them to Madie? Come yourself," seeing that she hesitated.

"But she might not want to give her opinion before me."

"Madie will be kind always, and because you are a woman like herself, struggling to make your own way in the world, she will be gentle. As she wishes to give her readers the best she can find, she will be just."

"I will go with you."

Madie was glad to see the girl that she had from the first befriended. While Lilian was talking to Josie, who loved her dearly, Jean beckoned to her co-worker and briefly narrated the facts, handing her the *Messenger* and little songs.

Madie read all three. "The *Headlight* will be fortunate in securing such gems to shine out in its columns Lil-

ian, did you think I would imagine for a moment that you were forcing articles upon me? I can almost see the daisies in the meadow and hear the brook ripple along, and feel the sunshine, when I read these songs of spring."

"I wish someone would answer him" said Benjie indignantly.

"Look at Madie," whispered Christa.

Jean looked. "I think we can safely expect an article in to-morrow night's paper from our managing editor."

They were not at all disappointed, but the editor of the *Messenger* was somewhat surprised. "This is the second sermon she has preached to me."

Madie was indignant at the thrust made at Lilian—ordering her to sew and not to write. "If he had not said that, I should have published her poems and made no comments."

She gave the first poem Lilian had written, and in another column an editorial on spring poetry, beginning with a quotation from Jean Ingelow:

"What change has made the pasture sweet,
And reached the daisies at my feet,
And clouds that wear a golden hem?
This lovely world, the hills, the sward,
They all look fresh as if our Lord
But yesterday had finished them."

During these rare May days, there is so much of poetry and rhythmical melody in the air, that it is small wonder that we have it translated into words by many would-be poets. But we ask, how can one cease dreaming when nature's blossoms upspringing

'Do paint the meadows with delight?'

or, how can one cease writing and talking of the weather when there is as much of it as on these balmy spring days?

Now, while we sympathize with 'ye editor,' we would like to say a few words in favor of the much-abused spring poet, knowing full well that it will be gratefully received; for,

'Ne'er,
Was flattery lost on poet's ear;
A simple race; they waste their toil,
For the vain tribute of a smile.'

When the 'lilies of the field' are rivaling 'Solomon in all his glory' it is difficult to keep from 'considering' them.

The average spring poet should, of his pages of gush over nature, possibly publish a single line, and in many instances 'twere better if he could exclaim with Canning:

'Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir.'

Yet this class of people is not so deserving of our pity as 'the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba and cry: "'Tis all barren!'

May and June are to the year what the Sabbath is to the week—a season of restful, beautiful quiet, in which

'To look through nature up to nature's God.'

One cannot refrain from a fancy now and then. Many times during the past week we have turned from our labors and gone down under the whispering branches, sending more than one wish, winged to an idea, way out into the beauty and freshness about us, and waited patiently for them to return with a new song to sing, but we were reminded of the Irishman's grandmother, 'who went upstairs nineteen times a day, and never came down again,' as only the quiet of wood and prairie was around us.

We sometimes wonder if these aspiring poets are surrounded by silence; or, do they hear the whisperings of nature? If there were no ear to catch these ghosts of melody, where would be your theory of sound?

The world is prosaic enough to many of us. We feel like cultivating a love for the beautiful at any time or anywhere, and hope it 'may never pass into nothingness.'

Rhapsodize on, oh, poets, and fill the waste-basket, or there would be no need of one. But remember that your version of Nature's grand symphonies should not be too often inflicted on the public. Poems should be more valuable than leaves in June, and therefore not as numerous. A green leaf is natural and will grow to maturity, but a green poem will rapidly wither and die.

We can feel the teachings of nature about us, though they float forever, unlettered through our brain, they are none the less lessons, and many a noble poet has not

deemed their teachings unworthy of his pen. As to every year there comes a spring, so to every spring there comes someone to interpret Nature's moods, or why should she have any?

Spring doesn't come, or Nature doesn't come, to the city. She stops outside in the quiet country, where she can do her work unmolested, and the birds sing their glad songs all day. We know that we have a few trees, and a park, and a grass plot here, but it isn't Nature any more than a sample of *moire* from Field & Leiter's is a '*toilet de visite*.'

Weeds should not be mistaken for flowers by the poet, and flowers should not be thrown aside as a weed, by the editor. We have spoken especially for those who are riding 'Pegasus with a side saddle.' School girls, be wary of his shying; if you are thrown by the wayside, modern chivalry, though it condole with you over your bruises, will not put forth a hand to assist you to mount again.

We would ask the editor to be pitiful over their failures. Many a birdling essays to use its wings too soon, but if it be true to its bird instinct, it will fly as the season grows older. So put it back, tenderly and carefully, in the nest.

We submit two fragments, each from a woman's pen, thinking that the surest blow to any aspiration is to see or hear something better than one can do himself. The slender fingers who penned the following lines did the work more acceptably than he who croaks of spring poetry, as though it were a scourge of the season.

'I took the threads for my spinning,
All of blue summer air,
And a flickering ray of sunlight
Was woven in here and there.'

—A. A. PROCTER.

'The world has blossomed, blossomed,
Gorgeous colors are unrolled,
And the tulips in their splendor
Seem a very Cloth of Gold.

'Oh, in this month of blossoms,
Heart, how can we be sad?
Let us cease this selfish weeping,
And with the world be glad;
Let us leave the purple splendors
Of the royal years behind,
And feel, though the best has faded,
Some good we yet may find.'

—HATTIE TYNG GRISWOLD."

When Madie went down to the street that night she was met by Mr. Roby. "Good evening, Miss Burton! I have just been reading your editorial and the little gem of a poem that you published to-day. You can't get the class of poetry we do, or you would not be so merciful to the writers. That poem I read in your paper was fine."

"You will find a *fac simile* in your waste-basket, if you have not destroyed your papers in the last week," said Madie.

The editor looked surprised. "How do you know?"

"The author told me, herself."

"Miss Ripley!" he ejaculated. "I had quite forgotten the name. In fact I did not notice who wrote the first poem; I didn't read it, and only noticed her name signed to the last. Now don't say it wasn't right; I feel ashamed of it myself, but if you go to blaming me, the spirit of contrariety is so great that I will begin to hunt around for excuses. Please acknowledge that we do get ever so much trash."

"We do, and publish a great deal, too. I know Miss Ripley, and she is as sweet and fair as her poems would indicate."

"I shall watch for her fancies after this. You have not 'all rights reserved' in regard to her writing, have you?"

"No, I am willing to share with you; I fail to discover any great degree of wit or wisdom in the dissensions of either editors or lawyers."

"We can't quarrel with you."

"Then you should be grateful to me for helping you keep your temper."

"We have several poets in Clayton now," he said, almost sorrowfully.

Madie laughed. "Why not poets to every town, as well as teachers, preachers, lawyers and editors? We used to have to go a long way for goods and have only one or two dresses a year. Now we have a number and the shops keep everything.

"Every class and variety are more fully represented; perhaps all are not as nice as they used to be, but some are,

and the question of supply and demand will regulate everything. Let me give you a verse to remember," said Madie, coming to her own gate.

"A motto for all? Well, go on."

"I will only give you the first stanza, but I wish all could read and remember Miss Proctor's '*Golden Words*.'

'Some words are played on golden strings,
Which I so highly rate,
I cannot bear for meaner things,
Their sounds to desecrate.'

"Something to think of. Thank you. Good night, sister editor," he said. "I am glad she belongs to the fraternity," he thought, as he hurried on to his own home, where his mother presided over his bachelor quarters.

Lilian sang and fluttered around the room, then stopped to read her poem aloud to her mother, in her sweet voice. "Mother, would you think me vain if I were to say that I think this poem is pretty?"

"I do not think I would; I never do when you have finished off a dress to suit you."

"I like this better than any dress I ever made." She leaned out of the window into the soft night air, and was so happy that her song had been published.

A note came to her from the editor of the *Messenger*, frankly acknowledging his error, and asking her to bring up something from her pen. "Isn't that nice, mother? Of course I will try."

Mr. Roby was usually a stern man. Seldom friendly with anyone, Madie was the only person, save his mother, with whom he had been more than "*businessly polite*"—as Aggie Peyton termed it—for years.

A few days after his conversation with Madie, a little girl, with pansy-purple eyes, came to his sanctum. He turned abruptly. "What's wanted?" The tone was so different from the note she had received, that she turned from him.

"I wished to see the editor," she said timidly.

"Turn this way then! I have that honor. What will you have?"

"Nothing,"—moving slowly toward the door. Her hesitating gait aroused his pity.

"I was a bear when I lived on earth before, and I sometimes growl now, but I never tear children or small young ladies to pieces. You came up to 'see the editor!' What do you think of him? Did you come through curiosity or on business?" Something in his tone reassured her.

"I received a note from you a few days ago and it made me so glad."

"Horrors!" thought the editor. "I hope it wasn't a love letter. She is evidently mistaken in the person. A breach of promise suit would be awful at my time of life!"

"It made me very happy, because I often get tired of sewing, and wish to do something else." She was so eager that she did not notice his blank look. "I didn't like you at all at first, but I do now. I came to tell you that I would accept your offer."

"She's bound to have me, and I might as well surrender. I have been thinking seriously of Miss Burton, but I can't say no to this little woman. When is it to be?" he asked aloud.

"Whenever you want it. I came myself to-day; mother thought it best. Miss Cragie and Miss Burton said they were willing; they thought it better for me, too."

"I wonder if all the women in town have conspired against me in this way?"

"Mother and I are all alone, and I sew to take care of us. I thought from what you said at first that you thought it was not right for me to try to do anything else."

He only heard the first part of this speech. "I am in for it, and will have to take care of the whole family. I wonder if the old lady will be meddlesome? After this I'll see that no young lady gets in to 'see the editor!' This is carrying woman's independence too far."

"Would you look at it now, please?" She handed him a roll of paper.

He took it, mechanically. "It can't be the license." In a peculiar running hand he saw a little poem, "The Robin's Lesson." "You are Lilian Ripley!"

"Why, yes; didn't you know? I was so confused I forgot to tell you."

"I find this in every way suited to our columns." He walked down to the door with her, and, coming back, sat down in his easy chair. "Well, I declare; freedom seems all the nicer after ten minutes of bondage! What a conceited prig she would think me if she had read my thoughts!"

CHAPTER XLII.

OBJECT LESSONS IN GEOGRAPHY.

Mattie Crowan had decided to teach. She had attended the examination, and received her certificate. Her father, mother and sister were as pleased with her success as she herself.

"I hope I shall be a success," she said.

"Hope and work, too, and you'll be one," her mother said.

"They are going to have a great teachers' meeting. All the principal educators of the state, and a number from abroad, will be there. I ought to go, I suppose."

"Of course you had, Mattie."

"But, mother, I do hate to go alone."

"Then Alice and I will go with you. I can't get John to go anywhere since he got back from Vermont. He says he saw enough to last him for one while."

Mrs. Crowan enjoyed it as she enjoyed everything. She was very much surprised when, toward the close of the meeting, the President announced:

"Moral Influence of Teacher and Pupil, by Prof. Mills of Colorado."

Ralph had arrived on the noon train, and the first they knew of his coming, he stood before them. The programme had been printed, with his name omitted, through his own request. "I am not sure that I can be there," was the excuse he had given the committee. Miss Cragie was reporting, so Madie was not there to hear.

"He is at home on that subject. I can get his MS., so I will not take notes. I am anxious to study the man." Jean accordingly laid aside her pencil and watched the reader.

"Tell me all about it, Lizzy," said John Crowan, as they were going home.

"It was real good. There were teachers and teachers; pretty, homely, large, small, young and old; just about such a mixed up crowd as you see at all such gatherings. Some of 'em carry their years of work in their faces, and some look as placid as can be. Some, just starting out, look as if they were going flower-gathering. Such folks generally gather weeds, for they ain't apt to look any too close. It made me begin to realize how full the world is to see all them girls. They can't all get schools for good wages. They'll either have to marry or teach school for nothing, and board around. Part of 'em didn't appear to advantage; they was so frightened; and others wasn't dashed at anything.

"They had a general discussion after each paper"—lowering her voice so Mattie could not hear. "The professor asked Mattie a question, and she answered it as well as any of 'em. I tried not to look a bit proud; but I just had to bite my lips to keep from smiling. She'll do, you'll find."

"Of course she will, Lizy."

"After Ralph Mills' essay, I didn't want to hear nothing else. I wanted 'em to take that as a benediction and be dismissed. It made me love the whole world—that paper of his did. And something in his voice and face kept a saying, 'these thoughts are mine always; I didn't make 'em up for this occasion.' But a man got up and talked, and he used every big word I ever heard of, except idiosyncrasy and juxtaposition, and I wanted to whisper them to him, for I knew he didn't calculate to miss anything."

Ralph and Madie drove to Mr. Crowan's one evening. "You were at the teachers' meeting?" said Madie.

"Yes, and all last week, while picking cherries and putting them up, and doing the thousand and one things that are necessary to do, on this farm at any rate, I thought of the crowd and the talks, but most of all, of your paper."

"I am glad to know that you liked it," said Ralph,

really pleased with the judgment of this shrewd woman.

"I've mixed up ironing and Agassiz, baking and Pestalozzi, and cherries and Froebel, and I can hear, above the splash of suds and the hum of the kettles, a cheering in my heart, as if encoring all the good things I heard. The seed sown then will keep me busy for days to come. I haven't got near through the harvest yet; the grain is all there, but part of it is lodged. It will be quite a while before I get it all bound, ready to stack away in Memory's store house. You wasn't there at all, was you, Madie?"

"No, I was busy in the office both days; but go on, I am enjoying it now."

"There was a good deal of style and dress, and lots of brains without any style. Every other man we met was a professor—begging your pardon, *Mr. Mills!*"

"Never mind me, Mrs. Crowan."

"They talk about having no titles in America, yet few men are now called plain Mister. In the Twentieth Century I suppose it will be Merchant Brown and Blacksmith Green, or abbreviations that will mean the same. It is Doctor, Elder, Reverend, Professor, General and Honorable now, and it has got so that a man's wife and family must call him by his title; his given name ain't used, and in a few years Mr. will be obsolete. I've branched off from the subject, but I guess I have told you all. The picture is there all right, but you need the shading to bring it out.

"Speaking of pictures makes me think of Christa. It does beat all how that girl can take a pencil and draw a house, and fix it all up outside and in! I am glad to see her do it. She can plan a house just as well—according to my notions—as them men who make it their business to do such work, way down East. It does seem kind of funny for folks to send out a *home* as they would a spring bonnet, and people all waiting for the latest style in both of 'em.

"I can't say that I just like the houses of to-day; but they are all buildings that you notice. Houses used to look as if folks lived in 'em! They don't always now.

Them 'Queen Anne cottages'—that would look just as curious to Queen Anne, if she could see 'em to-day, as they do to us—look to me kind o' deformed, and inside each one is all scarred up with a dado, frieze, fresco, and mercy knows what! I wouldn't care for such a room to sit and rest in."

"Everything changes, you know," said Ralph.

"Yes, I do know. Eight yards used to make a dress, but it takes twenty now. I believe it is kind of an injury to the mind to have to change it in regard to yourself and your house, every time the fashion changes. There's Mattie's classmate, that she sets so much store by—a real nice girl, only warped a little by fashion—last summer when she was out here, all her dresses was made with a train. She said she 'couldn't endure the sight of a short dress.' This summer she had had 'em all cut off, because 'the very best people are not wearing long dresses. I think myself that short dresses are real sensible.' I just said: 'Nellie, if the maples and poplars and tulips would shift around like that, our old Mother Nature would have her hands full.'

"Overskirts and basques on folks! Domes, gothics and porticoes on houses. Homes, clothes and dishes get in style and out just as fast as they can."

"It does tire one to think of it all," said Madie. "Come and see us while Ralph is here." Ralph seconded the invitation.

"Well, we will if we can. I've talked a good deal more than I intended. I never would have made a good minister."

"Why," asked Madie.

"Because, I couldn't have preached a sermon, unless I had taken the whole Bible for my text. I run on so from one thing to another, and switch off onto so many side tracks. I want to take everything right along with me, and I get a pretty long mixed train before I reach the station, on the main line, that I started for."

The homeward trip was filled with reminiscences. "I look back at the happy days of my childhood, and am

really vexed with myself, to think I did not enjoy them more at that time."

"I believe, Madie, that we realize sorrow more than joy. Grief is harder to bear in anticipation, or in the present; the retrospection is not so bad. In happiness the anticipation or memory is always brighter than the reality."

"I think that is because we are not apt to think deeply when we are quite happy; but a great sorrow leads us to think of everything."

They were silent then, and Leon trotted along soberly, as if he, too, were thinking. Each knew by some subtle knowledge that there was a struggle going on in the heart of the other.

"Tell me about Sada and Ned," said Madie, eager to break the stillness.

"They are very happy in their home life. Madie resembles you. We all notice it. Ned is spoken of as the next candidate for Congress, but I do not think Sada really wants him to go. We have both been interested in politics since going West. We fought for principle for four years, and like to see the two go together, now, with not quite so much policy."

"Sada does not write as often as she did at first. Matrimony often cancels correspondence between friends. I never should have thought in those old days that we could get along, as we do now, and only hear from each other once or twice during an entire season. Papa and mamma keep us posted. I am glad that they are so near each other."

"Friendship is a strong bond, but there is something stronger still." Ralph laid his hand over Madie's, in a protecting way, as he spoke.

"We must drive faster, please. I shall have to do some extra work when I get home."

"If you wish."

Madie knew he had meant to say more. "Ralph, my brother, friend! I want nothing stronger or better from any man than his friendship. I would far rather have

your friendship than the love of any other. Knowing my life, you should be satisfied with that."

"I will try, Madie, but I know it will be a vain effort."

She was careful that they should have no more long talks while he stayed. "I will be true to Douglas," she said firmly. "I wish Ralph and Aggie would become interested in each other." But the two were enjoying an eminently rational friendship. Robert Peyton was pleased to renew his intimacy with his old 'comrade in arms,' and he and his sister planned, busily, for the enjoyment of all.

Several clergymen, with their families, from the East, were camping near the lake, a few miles away, and held services every Sabbath during that warm July. Madie and Miss Cragie were acquainted with most of them. The senior of the party invited them to attend the Sabbath School and Sermon. "We do not want to have a Sunday picnic, but we would willingly welcome you and your friends."

"We will come and rest with you and with Nature," said Madie.

Robert and Ralph were agreed, and our friends drove out on the following Sabbath.

"Light and sound are in sympathy to-day," said Ralph softly. "The wood and river, and level pasture land beyond, make a restful scene, and the devotion and praise make sweet sounds."

The lesson told of Uzzah and the Ark of the Covenant.

"No sacrilegious hand should touch it."

"Who put it on the cart?"

"I presume one of the high priests, but I do not think it states."

This question, asked by Miss Cragie, was answered by the senior clergyman, who was teaching the class.

"Do you think Uzzah intended to disobey orders? It seems to me that such a motion might have been involuntary, and that it would have been a very natural thing for anyone to do that which he did. The first query in most minds would be; 'Should he have withheld his hand and

let it broken all to pieces?' I am way out in deep water; throw me a plank, please."

"The lesson is intended to teach strict obedience, no matter what comes. Uzzah's *faith* should have been stronger than any *impulse*. The ark would not have fallen, as you well know, Miss Cragie, if you stop to consider that God never made a law to be destroyed. Christ came only to fulfill, and not to destroy. This lesson is applicable to 'ye of little faith.' Do you understand?"

"I do not think I shall sink, for I have reached shallow water, but I have not quite reached the shore."

"The 'shore' is beyond the River! where the

'Jasper walls are shadowless
Around the Great White Throne.'

"Are you content?" asked the teacher's wife earnestly.

"I do not think she can be, quite. The grandest thing I know to say of Heaven is: 'We shall all be satisfied.'"

"We will take that as the end of our lesson," said the minister, smiling at Madie who had spoken. "Let us pray."

In the twilight Madie opened the piano. "We play at this time every Sunday evening; while papa and mamma, way off there, are listening. We are together, in thought, for a little while. We sing the old songs, for they bring memories with them that the new cannot."

Josie stood by Madie. "I want to sing alone, for I want them to hear me."

"What do you want to sing?"

"I want to sing, first place, 'There is a Happy Land.'"

"Well," and Madie struck the chords. Her version was not exactly like the one in the book, but no one had the heart to correct her.

"Now I'll finish up with 'Bell *My Home*,' because that is mamma's name. But when in the chorus she sang:

"Wait for me for heaven's sake!
Sweet Bell, my home,"

the mirth of the entire group was aroused.

"That picture is hung crooked. Isn't it funny?" said Benjie, trying to find something to laugh at.

"It isn't hung funny, not a bit! If I were in your place I should feel very 'shamed! You were laughing at me, and it is no way to do, not a tall! I shall stop singing until my mamma comes back!" The indignant, grieved, baby face touched all.

"You sang nicely, and I shall write and tell mamma all about it." Madie coaxed her back to smiles and good humor; Josie never went far in the paths of ill-temper, and was easily brought back.

Though Madie had resolved to avoid Ralph, they had many a bright, earnest talk together. "A conversation with him straightens many crooked thoughts and helps them to grow into a symmetrical passage, as a young tree is straightened by a stronger hand," she confessed to herself.

Mrs. Crowan and her daughters came in one evening. "I wish you'd look over the harness, Bert. There is something wrong, I am sure." Her hair was in greater disorder than usual.

"Did you have a runaway?" he asked.

"No, a kickaway, coming down Bald Hill. We straightened things the best we could. Our hired man hitched up for us, and he doesn't know what he's about half the time."

"Absent-minded," suggested Christa.

"That's it; chronic, too, I guess. I haven't seen any symptoms of any since he's been at our house."

"It is hereditary in some families," said Aggie, laughing.

"Put the horse in the barn, Bert. We will have a nice evening all together; everyone is acquainted with every other one. Call Robert and Ralph, Benjie," said Christa.

"Our evenings at home are our rest hours, and we will make of this an extra vacation," Madie said, as she took her visitors' hats. They gathered together for a good visit.

"Mrs. Beck is going to Europe. I almost envy her the trip."

"Why, Mattie, I never heard you express any envy before," said Aggie.

"I am afraid I have felt that way several times," she answered honestly.

"Mrs. Beck will be able to describe her trip to us when she gets back. She is such a good conversationalist. Her sister went two years ago, but she had nothing to tell, except that she saw a German Princess," said Mrs. Crowan.

"Was she the one who joined the Good Templars just before she went, and said 'she was so sorry that she didn't wait and join after she came back, because all over Europe they asked her to take wine, and laughed because she would not,'" asked Christa.

"Yes, she was the one. I believe it is the first instance that I ever knew of, where a person was sorry that she had done right too soon. I've often heard those mourn, who began to be good later than they ought to. She was true to her pledge, and that was honest; but she ought not to have been ashamed of it."

"Did you read Lilian Ripley's poem on Truth?" asked Robert. "It seems to me that chimes in with and answers this subject."

"Yes, we all read it; it was nice," replied Alice. "I told mother, 'there's another of your best quality, warranted not to wear rough.'"

"When I look at her," said Jean, "I think, if woman brought sin into the world, she has redeemed herself, for to-day she brings goodness and gladness, too."

"Amen," said Ralph reverently. He thought of another slender girl, who was working with honor to her sex.

"You go in as one of Prof. Pearce's assistants this fall, do you not?" Robert enquired of Mattie.

"Yes; I shall try teaching for one year, anyway."

"Mattie says that she knows she will like to teach arithmetic and grammar, but she cannot interest a class in geography."

"I can't see its importance myself, mother. You can-

not expect me to make a class see that which I cannot."

"You seemed to enjoy studying geography last fall when we took our journey."

"Yes, Alice. But that was entirely by the 'object method.'"

"I have a great deal of respect for geography," said Jean.

"So have I; if I could only make Mattie see how much there is meant in the definition, 'to describe the earth.' I don't much like the idea of asking scholars, how many square miles there is in each state, or what direction New York is from every other city. But I would like to have them know that they study geography every time they look at a sunset, or go for a ride in the country, and that they will study it every day of their lives, as long as they live.

"There isn't much here below but what does come under the head of a 'description of the earth upon which we live,' shape, size, motion, products, people, politics, and religion. What else is there? History is the gossip, spelling, the puzzle; reading, the art; arithmetic, the measured rule; grammar, the prevailing fashion; and writing is the general assistant in the common branches of learning; but geography reaches out, farther than any other, toward the infinite. We are studying political geography to-night, 'Manners and customs of people.' We'll study the other divisions before to-morrow morn"

"I wish I had taken notes!" said Madie merrily, when Mrs. Crowan had done speaking, "We would have had a whole column of pithy thoughts. I like to get hold of conversation to give to our readers, to get down to the bottom of it; and to go from our home to theirs. An editor should understand human nature."

"I think your paper is always real," said Alice.

"If it isn't we have failed in our intention."

"Mr. Roby said, 'your paper could not but be good, because you were so true and good yourself!' When a brother editor makes such an exceptional remark, all should believe!" said Christa, triumphantly.

"I have you and Jean to thank for the success."

"We will not accept it, Madie. You hold the editorial pencil," said Jean.

"I am afraid my paper *speaks* better than I *do*. I cannot quite practice up to my theory."

"Our faith is always a little in advance of our works. When the two are really united, perfection is reached."

"Thank you, Ralph; I think I understand."

"If there is anything that is tiresome, it is a dressed-up picnic; but we are not going to have one. We are all going to the woods for to-day. Robert has planned it, and I am going to help him to carry it out. You can leave for one afternoon, I am sure. There is nothing to report to-day. If you want anything to fill up I will write a story on willowy grace, gliding footsteps, and eyelashes that sweep the cheek, although I do not ever remember seeing any of the three. I am willing to do anything if you will only go."

"Aggie generally plunges into the middle of a subject and reaches back and pulls the rest after her. She gets through all right; though I confess to hardly seeing how she does it."

"There, Robert, you needn't try to explain me, we are going gypsying; Lilian, and you folks, and we folks, and we will have a 'jolly time, and all take tea' in the woods!"

"I don't see——" Madie began, but Aggie put her hand over her lips.

"I have my opinion of people who never will take time to rest. We will not even take a croquet set, lest it be too much work to play."

"This is my last day; will you go, Madie?"

"When my work is done, Ralph. The others can go this morning."

"No, we are all going together early in the afternoon, I have decided; Robert has always been a very good brother and he shall not be frustrated in his plans. It will be nice to go to a picnic, where we are not obliged to taste of everybody's cake, and tell them how good it is.

We will be just as foolish as we used to be when we played school with a dust-pan for a geography." Aggie hurried home to make preparations for the excursion.

Ralph accompanied Madie to her work. "I am sure I can help you this morning; I am determined to try, at least."

"Then I shall yield gracefully." All worked so faithfully that they were ready to leave at two o'clock.

At Ralph's request they went to the ground where they had celebrated on that 4th of July, so long ago.

He found the very spot where Madie had saved himself and Josie. "Youthful days gone forever," he said.

"Please not to make the youthful friends as unreal," said Madie gently.

"My friendship isn't real," he returned quickly.

"I am sorry, for I desire it very much."

They had erected a swing under the grand, old oaks. "Come, let me swing you; I remember you used to like it," he said, vexed at himself for making her sad.

"I wish you would forget sometimes," thought Madie, as she walked with him toward the swing.

Josie met them, with her hands full of acorns. "Don't rob yourself," awed by her generosity, as she gave him all she had.

"I don't like them a bit," she answered. "You can have them."

He and Madie exchanged glances.

"Do not say, 'the way with the world;' she wanted to do something to make your day bright, and these were all she could find," said the older sister.

Madie went way up to the higher branches and back again with such a rush. "I have left all care, and doubt, and weariness behind; this is perfect rest and freedom," she thought. "If I had not remembered that your arms were not proof against weariness, I could have swung all the afternoon."

"I will swing you as long as you wish me to."

"You have; thank you, Ralph."

Aggie proposed that they climb the bluff. "The

other hills hide their rocks by trees, but this stands out gray and grim."

They gathered blue bells, clinging to the rocks, and looked down the valley over the steep sides, when they reached the top. "Something tender clings to the roughest," said Robert, as he tossed a handful of flowers into Christa's lap.

Lilian enjoyed the day with the zest of a child. "You are lovely millers, who grind out pleasant surprises for me every few days!" she said enthusiastically.

"And we receive toll from you in return," said Aggie.

"When can I come again, Madie?" Ralph asked, when he went to say "good by."

"When papa and mamma come home. We shall be glad to see you always."

"Oh, Madie! Madie!"

"Good by," she said, looking at him through her tears.

Ralph left her, and joined Robert, with a more lonely feeling in his heart than he had ever known before.

"She will never come to me. This giving her up is final, and I shall never see her again!" he thought sadly.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ALMOST AN EPIDEMIC.

Madie was very quiet for days after Ralph's departure. "The summer nearly gone and no time to rest yet! There is no use to try to deny it; I am completely tired." She laid her pencil down, and thought of Josie's wail when her parents went away. "I want my own father and mother, and just no one else."

Christa held out her hand. "Your forfeit, if you please, Miss Burton."

"'Jack' has not expired. I let go for a moment to rest."

"You have carried it well, darling! It will never go out in your hands."

"I must go and see Mrs. Ripley. She is not at all well."

As she was tying on her hat, the boy from the *Messenger* office brought a note to her. An invitation from Mr. Roby, to drive that evening.

"What shall I do?"

"Go, certainly," said Christa, when she had read the note. Madie wrote a note of acceptance, and gave it to the boy.

"How indifferent you are," said Christa.

"How should I act?" But she went out without waiting for an answer.

She found Mrs. Ripley very much worse. "I shall come back and stay with you to night. You must not be left alone," she said to Lilian, when she left.

The ride that evening was pleasant. The two had many tastes in common, and that always places people on an equal footing. Madie told her companion of Lilian's mother, adding, "She is such a frail little thing that I shall be afraid for her if this loss comes. She will be all alone."

"Can I be of service to you or her? If so, do not hesitate to call on me."

"I will not, if you are needed."

"I like the little girl, and would do all I could for any of your friends," with a slight emphasis on the pronoun.

"I thank you for this pleasant companionship. I hope it may be the beginning of many pleasant trips that will be entertaining and profitable to both."

"Good night. I am, also, grateful for the ride."

All through the remaining month of summer Mr. Roby was very devoted. Each of the girls, in turn, managed to spend many hours with Lilian and her mother. One morning Miss Cragie came home with the intelligence that the frail girl was alone in the world. Mrs. Peyton went to stay with her.

"What can I do, Lily darling?" asked Madie, holding her close in her arms.

"Nothing; but bring my mother back to me."

"I would if I could." She did not tell her that "it was all for the best," that "her mother was happier now." Lilian knew that herself. When the shadow first falls, silence, or simple words of love, is best.

When the body was laid away, Madie went to Lilian. "Come with us, we are working women together. I think we all need you. I have lost a dear one, too. Come!"

The orphan packed her belongings, and tearfully bade farewell to the rooms which she had found so desolate, and had made of them a cheerful home.

"You shall have a small room to yourself now, and a larger one after a while. We are going to enlarge our house, as a surprise for papa and mamma when they come, and you shall have an apartment where you can put all your little treasures."

"I will thank you by and by; I don't believe I can now," said Lilian tearfully.

Mrs. Leith had long been an admirer of Miss Ripley, and gladly accepted her tasteful suggestion in regard to the home arrangements. "Ilka body has her ain gait

to gang. You are better i' the parlor, and I am gude wi' the kitchen work," she said, her honest face glowing with satisfaction as she watched Lilian arrange the delicate ornaments on the mantel.

Mr. Roby became more and more devoted to Madie. He let her see in many ways that she was growing necessary to his happiness.

"She ought to be very happy with him. I think him the nicest man I ever have known," thought Lilian.

Madie herself half thought that it would be better so. It was a strong temptation to her. "Both papers could then be consolidated, my work could go on just the same as now; and I have a sincere friendship for him. I don't believe he is so much in love with me, as he is thoroughly satisfied. He has given me to understand that he thinks I would be a help to him." She considered it in the light of a business arrangement. "Perhaps I had better accept." But the woman spoke then: "I cannot do it. If I should have trouble to face I never could go to him, for I should remember that I married him to further my ambition. What faith could he have in me, if he knew? Ambition is not all!"

She was busy with her work the next time Mr. Roby called. Lilian entertained him. Madie came in for a few moments, just before he went away. "I have been neglecting my work lately," she said; while she thought, "It is kinder of me to do this than it would be to let him go any further."

"The evening has not been altogether unsatisfactory, after all," the editor declared to himself when he left the house.

He continued his calls; but, after the first, was neither surprised nor greatly disappointed that he saw Madie, Christa and Jean for only a short time, and spent the remainder of the evening with Lilian. The three editors were very busy during the autumn months, and worked every evening.

One night Mr. Roby ordered his carriage. "If Miss Burton is too busy, I will take Miss Ripley. Perhaps

she may not care to play second in that way. I ought to have written a note, but we ought to have gotten beyond such formality by this time." With a vague idea that he was going to invite some one of the young ladies there, he rang the bell.

He knew by the slow, uneven footsteps that Lilian was coming to the door. So it was she that he invited. Madie brought a shawl. "The evenings are cool and you will need it." She stood on the verandah and saw them drive away.

"I wonder if she didn't want to go? No, I do not think she did." This thought of Lilian's answered the other.

Mr Roby usually amused her, as he would a child, with bright, pleasant sayings, yet sometimes, as to-night, he felt as if he were talking to an earnest, intelligent woman.

"Heigh-ho! there's no fool like an old fool. Here is another picture of 'January and June!' I must put it out of my mind. I can be kind and fatherly, or at least elder brotherly to all these girls. How Miss Madie does improve! Her paper is going way ahead of mine, though there are a few old fogies, like myself, who hate to acknowledge it," the editor mused, as he sat in his own room that night.

In the next house another romance was trying to thrive. Mrs. Peyton had heard Aggie spoken of twice as a prospective spinster—she was in reality twenty-five—and it troubled her greatly.

"Aggie, you never will marry, I'm afraid!"

"It doesn't look very encouraging, mamma. I never have had an offer yet, and I'm glad I haven't any to brag of. You aren't tired of seeing me here, are you?"

"No, Aggie; only most all your friends are married, or going to be, and I do enjoy the preparations for a wedding. It has been a long time since I have been interested in one."

"It does seem too bad that you and papa are the only

ones in the family who are married. Robert ought to be the next."

"He will wait forever for Christa Burton!"

"He will be rewarded at last, mamma; in the meantime let us glean as much happiness as we can along our solitary way!" Mrs. Peyton smiled, and the subject dropped.

A gentleman from New York was visiting at a friend's, across the street from Mr. Peyton's. "I want you to meet Miss Peyton, she is a charming girl," said his hostess.

"I hope I may have that pleasure then." Aggie, not knowing that Mrs. Capron had company, ran in soon after; she never walked when she could just as well skip along.

Mr. Desmond was charmed immediately. During the conversation he spoke of his wife, and looked at Aggie, searchingly. The young lady did not make a long call.

When she left there, she went straight to her friends. The four girls were alone. "Girls! I am afraid I have found another widower. His tone, when he mentioned his wife, sounded as if she used to be, but was not now, and he looked at me as if I resembled some one whom he had known. Isn't it dreadful that no woman who looks as I do can live?"

The girls could not refrain from laughter. Aggie had a way of saying things that was irresistibly funny. "I know that Mrs. Capron had spoken of me to him, from the appearance of both of them. I like her ever so well, but she tells her husband everything, so I cannot make a confidential friend of her. How could I, when I know that they will be repeated to a third party?"

"She is happily married herself, and wishes to see all her friends comfortably settled. I presume she does not stop to study into the wisdom of the step, in every instance," said Christa.

Mr. Desmond was a persevering man, and devoted himself to Aggie from that time. Mrs. Capron said: "You

can't do better! He will dress you splendidly, and you need never lift your finger to do a particle of work."

"I hardly consider that an inducement. I know that I have never had much of an object in life, and I am ashamed of it. But I believe I could support myself if it were necessary, and be happy, too."

Mrs. Capron thought best to make no reply.

Aggie went, as usual, to the girls. "My worst fears are realized! I am going to be here frequently, for a few weeks. Whenever Mr. Desmond calls, mamma leaves me as if the bill of sale were all made out, and he could take the article as soon as he wished. He takes to matrimony dreadful easy. The fourth place in his affections is the best he can do now. I coughed badly the other night; I didn't know but he might think I was not long for this world, but he seemed to like me all the better for that."

"Do you think you are treating him as you ought?" asked Jean.

"I would not speak of him to anyone else. But you are like sisters, and the only ones I can talk to. I see, too, the tribute he pays me. He offers the best he has. But he is nearly sixty. He has amassed his fortune in speculations that are no more honorable than gambling. His reputation isn't spotless either, and, though the world does not severely censure, I could not marry a man who was not his 'sister's, as well as his brother's keeper.'"

"Bravo!" cried Madie, clapping her hands.

"He has Honorable prefixed to his name," said Christa.

"I know; but I think that it is only an adjustable title that he puts on when away from home. I think he was a policeman when he was young and aspiring.

"If you ever hear that I am married, you can make up your minds that I am irrevocably in love, that *he* is my equal, and I may think him more, and that he will be temperate and clean. Whether he be rich or poor, handsome or homely, you must find out for yourselves. I rather hope he will be *homelike*. If the right man comes,

and we love each other, I will tell you; if not, I shall do the best I can with Agnes Peyton."

"I shall start a matrimonial column, with you and Mrs. Crowan as joint editors," said Madie.

"No, indeed; I have said my say now, and will have nothing to 'lay over for the next issue.' I had better discussed the silver bill or something else that I did not understand."

During the autumn, they had their house altered, carrying out, as nearly as they could, the plans they had gone over with their parents before they left.

New Years came to them, and in two days Jean was to leave them. "I am glad Lilian is here; I shall not feel as if I were leaving you all alone."

The nimble fingers that had prepared her trousseau were resting idly on the window-sill. "I am glad, too," she said simply. "But I shall miss you, Jean."

"It seems as if we all wanted you, and only your presence would satisfy us," said Christa.

"I am not going to have you go to a great deal of preparation, and leave you with the comforting thought following me that I have tired you all completely. Before I'll have these last days pass in confusion, I'll get a luncheon and go off somewhere."

Mrs. Leith laughed merrily. "Miss Madeline is the one frae whom I receive my orders. She doesna seem to want you to gang awa' frae her ain hoos. We all hae a moind to do the best we can for you, wha we all love sae dearly; I dinna doubt, Miss Jean, but we all wad be troubled more not to do't."

Ray's people were all there. Phil, genial and bright as ever; Carrie, happy herself and doing all in her power to lead everyone to that blissful state. "I like my husband's children just as well as if they were 'my very own,' as we used to say of our dolls," she said to Madie.

Jean looked grandly beautiful in her plain traveling-dress, when she solemnly pledged herself to her husband.

"She will be faithful in this, as in everything else," said Madie.

When they had gone, she went off alone. "I just want Jean, and I know I can't have her again. Why am I always trying to grasp impossibilities? Ray is proud and fond of her, and he may well be both."

Phil found time for several merry talks with Aggie. He remembered his oft-quoted comparison of her, and added another point of similarity: "A good deal of hit and miss about her, also! She is so changeable."

"I have hardly had time to say a word to either Uncle Ben or Aunt Prue," said Madie, when they were leaving, a few hours after the wedding. "But I have felt as if there were a great deal of sunshine to spare both days you have been here."

"Well, you have enjoyed your visit, or our visit a little, then," said her aunt brightly.

"I do not want many more such breaks in our family," said Benjie.

While Josie sniffed and said: "What makes Jean marry and go off? I'm so mad at her and Ray; both of them."

r. Roby still called and enquired for all; but seemed best satisfied with Lilian.

"I wonder if I asked for the other girls at all? I don't believe I did," he thought doubtfully, after he had spent an evening at the pleasant home. "I wish I had accepted her that day she offered herself to me in my den; I would be safely out of the difficulty now. I have never read romances; but I see now that I should have done so. I'll talk to mother."

He acted immediately upon the resolution. "Mother, what would you say to anyone if you loved, or liked her, rather? I hate to say the other word, it makes me feel foolish."

"What would I say, Eugene? Why, I'd tell her of it in the best English I could command. I hope you will; you've been alone a long time."

"More than two score years. If I should write to her, I presume I should pen it like an editorial, or 'I now take

my pen in hand.' And that isn't just what I want to say."

"I never knew your audacity to forsake you; so you had better go right to her."

"Mother, I believe I will! But you see, I've been there once to-night, and its nearly midnight now. I think I had better wait."

The stately, white haired lady looked at her son, with eyes full of mirth. "Eugene, you are wise in your conclusions. I will call on the young ladies to-morrow. I have not been there since Jean Cragie left."

The girls were always glad to see Mrs. Roby. A thorough patrician with common sense to balance it. She enjoyed the young faces about her. "Come and see me often. I intend to be gayer this winter. Do not make a call; but come with the expectation of spending the evening."

"Do not go yet," urged Christa.

"I must go home, my son will expect to find me when he returns. I came late in order to find you all here." Her son was at the door, at this moment.

"Miss Lilian, will you ride this evening?"

There was a crimson dash on her delicate face as she accepted the invitation.

"I will stay here until you return," said Mrs. Roby. Madie and Christa enjoyed one of the *real* visits that we have only once in a while.

"Lilian, do you remember what you said to me the first time we ever met?"

"I said a great many things, and you didn't seem to understand me."

"Oh, yes; I think I did, a part of it, at least. You said 'I didn't like you at all at first, but I do now.' I have been glad of that, Lilian. I asked you 'when it was to be?' and you answered: 'Whenever you want it.' I want it to be just as soon as you can come to me. I thought a good many things then, and I have thought a great many more since. I liked *you* at first. I have a

stronger feeling for you now; I think it will keep on increasing all the days of my life. I'm not giving to romancing, and I know my feelings will never change in regard to you.

"I shall be an editor as long as I live; but I know I shall be a very poor one, from this time, unless you promise to come and help me."

"But your mother——"

"Will be very glad, for me and for herself, to have you come to us. Lilian you are as quiet as I was that day, last spring. Aren't you going to answer me? I wonder if everyone is silent when receiving an offer of marriage? I was and you are. Shall you throw this into the waste-basket?"

"No; I think it is in every way suitable, and——"

"What?"

"Yes; Mr. Roby."

The editor was happy, and the little lame girl was never more to know the stings of poverty; encircled by the love of this eccentric man, she looked out into the world with happy, glad eyes.

Mrs. Roby heard them as they drove up. "I will not keep him waiting. Now remember you are to come soon," she said. Her keen old eyes saw the tears and smiles on the young face, as the light of the hall lamp shown upon it; she stooped and kissed her, and Lilian went on to her room.

"Eugene, shall I condole with you?"

"I think you had better, mother. I shall sing 'Old Hundred' right here on the street if something isn't said to sober me."

"I think that would hardly do for a staid bachelor and a newspaper man at that."

"You can't apply the first title to me much longer. My little Lily," he said under his breath, "when you are transplanted to my home, I hope you may be as happy as I wish you to be."

"It's going through this street like an epidemic," groaned Christa, when she heard of the new engage-

ment. "Who is to be the next one? I take a powerful disinfectant in the shape of the oldest dresses I can find, but I haven't a doubt but what I shall be the next to be taken."

"I beg of you to wait until papa and mamma come home. I am not equal to the task of chaperoning any more lovers!" cried Madie.

Bert and Benjie were quite disgusted. The little girl, who had done so much to entertain them and assist them in many ways, was a companion they hated to lose. They did not know very much about ladies, save their school-mates and those that comprised their home circle.

"I can't see what she wants to leave us and go to Roby's for."

"*Mr.* Roby," corrected Madie.

"Oh, well, I know," said Bert, and then laughed, a little ashamed of himself.

"I am glad for Lilian's own sake that she is going to a bright, happy home where she will be tenderly cared for. She is too frail and slender to always do for herself."

"If she were only large and strong like you, I suppose she could get along." He looked down at his sister whose head came just above his shoulder. "I feel ashamed every day that you work to keep us in school."

"As I have said many times, Bert, you can both do better work if you are thoroughly prepared for it. I have had to be strong, because there has been much depending upon me. You do help in the type-room, with the locals, and all you can, aside from your school work."

Both boys gave her a "regular bear hug," as Josie termed their caresses, and went on to school. "Our sisters" were the pride of each.

CHAPTER XLIV.

? AND !

"We are coming home the 10th of April." What a shout went up when Madie read the letter.

"'Coming home!' I do not believe we will be disappointed this time," said Christa.

"I am glad that we only have three days to wait," said Benjie.

"Is it morning time or night time now?" Josie used to ask when she first began to talk. Madie remembered the saying, and said, "It is all morning time now."

"Madie, I wish you would find something light and nice to put on," said Josie, coaxingly.

"I have worn these somber colors as a protection, and I have felt like wearing them, but I will dress brightly for papa and mamma," she promised.

"Let me arrange the house. I am going to hang those pretty sketches of Christa's on the wall and make the room look bright."

"If you will, Lilian," said Madie. "You will do it so nicely. 'They are coming!' the clock ticks it, and the teakettle hums it, and my steps echo it as I go down the street. Those words fill all the hours that are passing now."

"Madie laughs and sings just as she used to," Bert whispered to Benjie.

"Winter is running away in a thousand little rills, and I am right glad," said Lilian. "It should be spring-time without and within, to-morrow. The clover and grass is springing up all along the edge of the walk, and I heard a robin this morning; it said, 'Spring is coming.'"

"No; it said, '*They* is coming!'" said Josie emphatically.

"So they are, darling, and we will 'never mind the weather!'" said Christa.

"We never had so much difficulty in keeping interested in the work as to-day!" both sisters confessed on that last evening that they were to spend alone.

"How slowly the minutes drag! They are handed over so grudgingly, it seems to me," said Bert.

"Will they like the house, I wonder?" Benjie threw aside his book as he spoke. "I can't study to-night."

"Will they think we have done well?"

"If we are patient a little longer, Christa, the questions will all be answered. Will papa look as he did before he was sick?"

"There, Madie; who is asking questions now?" But Madie only smiled at Bert in reply.

The tenth of April came. "We must all go to the depot. I cannot delay the meeting a moment longer than is necessary," said Christa.

"We will have everything ready for you at home," Lilian and Mrs. Leith promised.

They stand on the platform, and it is difficult to tell which of the group is most eager. Bert, alert as usual, sees the smoke of the approaching engine. Madie's heart is beating so she can scarcely get her breath. "How slowly it comes around the curve. I never knew it to make such poor time before," said Benjie.

The train stops, and they rush ahead. How many people who are strangers to them get off!

"What makes them crowd along so?" exclaimed Bert.

No familiar faces make their appearance; Josie's under lip comes out at this great disappointment. "They have not come." Each word fell heavily from the baby tongue.

"No," said Madie sadly.

"There they are! Hurrah!" At Bert's words the days of absence are thrown back into the past, and they stand in the blissful present. The revulsion of feeling is too much. They laugh, and cry, and talk, or almost

scream together. *Blase* faces at the car windows are interested in this "touch of nature that makes the whole world kin."

"We are attracting attention," said Madie.

"Who cares if we are? I've always heard that travel was a great educator; and they can see a bit of joy here. Besides, they will have a pleasant thing to tell of when they get home," said Bert.

They crowd in front of and around them, getting in each others way, and if it had not been for the presence of mind of Robert Peyton, they would have found difficulty in reaching the carriage.

"I feel as if I were ten instead of nearly twenty-three," said Christa.

They all understand Josie's feelings, when she says: "I want to get home and take off some of my clothes. I am so happy they feel tight."

"We have indulged in a few extravagances," Madie explained, as they neared the house.

"Why, is this home?"

"Yes, papa." They looked doubtfully around.

"It must be, Madie, yet it is greatly changed for the better."

The children could not wait, but showed them through the house immediately. "How nice it is! and just as we all planned!" said Mrs. Burton.

"We tried to have it as you wished it, but we could not quite remember in every particular."

"It does seem to me as if it were all new, and it looks nicer, too! I guess 'cause I never looked through it with you before," said Josie, clinging to a hand of each.

"It looks prettier to me than ever before; I think it must be for the same reason," said Christa, with an affectionate look at each.

Lilian had fled to her own room, thinking she would be the extra in this family gathering. She was thinking sadly of her own mother when Madie called her.

Her shyness speedily left her when she entered the room. "Mamma, this is Lilian."

"Lilian, I have been anxious to see my other daughter," and the great mother heart made room for the orphan.

Mr. Burton's quiet, "Lilian, come and welcome me home," made her both glad and sad.

"How can we work to-morrow?" Christa asked Madie.

"I don't know, but the power to do will come with the day. It does seem, however, as if we could never settle into the old quiet. How did we ever get through those two years without them?"

"An unanswerable question, Madie."

"Please listen to me: I don't want you to talk very much while I am gone. I am going after my doll that Lilian dressed for me," Josie requested, as she trotted away in search of her "Matilda doll."

"My feelings exactly!" laughed Madie. "Here I am letting Lilian do the honors of the house!" recollecting herself, and going out to consult with Mrs. Leith about the supper, but, forgetting what she went for, came back and joined in the conversation.

When the table was in readiness, Lilian called them. "You must see our kind housekeeper, who has done so much to make our home life pleasant," said Christa, taking Mary Leith by the arm and leading her forward as she spoke.

"I was rejoiced when I heard that Mrs. Bruce's daughter was with my ain bairns," said Mrs. Burton, adopting the Scotch dialect.

"And the dochter is mair joyfu' than she can tell't to hae been wi' your lads and lassies."

Early the next morning Mr. Burton went with his daughter to their work. "How is the business? But I need not ask, everything looks prosperous."

The editorial room was like a cosy sitting-room. "We have carried home with us," said Christa. Her plans were exhibited, and her easel stood in the corner with its unfinished painting. "We can work better with the familiar articles all around us. Madie and Jean did the journalistic work, while I carried out my own plan of labor."

"You have 'managed,'" said her father, with a smile.

"We have all worked; the boys have done a great deal. We are not wealthy yet, papa, but we are comfortable. Your's and mamma's letters have helped us wonderfully. I was sure when I wrote a good editorial, for people attributed it to your sound judgment."

The bird in the cage at the window looked around with his little sharp eyes, turning his head on one side to study the intruder; the sunlight came in through the window, and the soft air breathed through the plants and blossoms.

While she was preparing copy, Madie told of the work and plans. "Jack's Afire yet!" she said triumphantly.

"I understand, Madie. Your mother and I have talked of it many times. Your motto has been as a beacon light to the entire family."

"You can go over the business if you wish."

"No; I am more than satisfied with your statement. You have had a hard struggle; I trust it may be brighter now. I shall never be strong, but I may be spared for many a year, and I am determined that the burden shall not lie so heavily on your young shoulders. I was narrow and doubtful for a time, but my daughters have broadened my views, and I do not hesitate to say that I think you girls could do any work that you set out to do, for you would not set out to do impossibilities."

"Any woman or man can do good work, if it is shown that it is necessary to be done," said Madie. "We are repaid a thousand fold, papa."

"I am not sorry that my eldest children are girls. Possibly, if you had been boys, you would to-day be 'sowing wild oats,' and causing us much trouble. Come in, Bell," he said, as his wife appeared at the door.

"I could not endure the separation, so followed you, and arrived just in time to have my say."

"We are waiting to hear."

"It is this, Frank: Boys will be gentle and true if they are brought up in that way; girls will be strong and self-reliant if there is need."

"I heartily endorse the position taken," said Christa. "But our paper must go to press at three o'clock."

Mr. Burton went to the table and worked with his daughters.

"Ralph came to see us just before we left. Madie, can you not give him the answer he wishes?" Mrs. Burton asked that evening.

"Mamma, you, too?"

"He has been as one of our family so long, and I thought you might be happier with him."

"I cannot let go until the boys are ready to put their 'shoulders to the wheel,' and I cannot forget Douglas."

"My darling, I do not want to selfishly keep you with me, but I am not sorry to know that you will stay with us."

"Must it be seven years, Christa?"

"Yes, Robert; papa cannot stand the entire work." So Robert waited still.

"Lilian, they do not need you, and I do," Mr. Roby emphatically declared.

"Mr. Roby, it is so short a time since mother left me."

"She would not wish you to be alone."

"We have not been engaged a year, and it ought to be as long as that. We want to know each other better."

"But, you see, I don't want you to know me any better. You might change your mind. We have been 'engaged a year.' It is just twelve months since you proposed to me and I accepted. It isn't right to break one's word in that way. If there's any better in my nature you'll be sure to bring it out."

"It shall be as you wish, Mr. Roby."

"My mother gave me something years ago, and that gift has fallen into disuse. In my old age I want to turn it to account and you must help me. What is the good of having anything that can't be used? My *given* name is Eugene. It is a proper name, too; I want you to make it common."

"Eugene," she said, smiling, "when you want me, I will come."

They helped her to get ready and she went to the home and love awaiting her.

"My 'Easter Lily!' welcome," said her husband. "My paper shall grow broader and grander because of you; my talks with you are ever a prelude to a grand thought song."

Many people have music, and paintings, and flowers, because their neighbors' houses are filled with them. Mrs. Roby surrounded herself with them because she loved them, and home and beauty entered with her into that house, never to leave it again.

"My dollars used to be worth a hundred cents, and I kept them; now they are all *trade* dollars for the benefit of my wife and me," said the happy husband, as he lavished his gifts upon his equally happy wife.

"If mamma only knew of my joy."

"I think she does, Lilian, for I believe that way up yonder her song will be gladder and brighter because of your happiness here," said Madie.

CHAPTER XLV.

SEARCHING FOR REST AND FINDING CONTENT.

Glad moments dance away so fast. The summer was gone before they knew it.

Madie was very tired. Each member of the family noticed her wearied look.

"I wish she would take a vacation, but I know she will not," said Christa anxiously.

They were all surprised that Mrs. Crowan had not made them a real visit since their parents had come home. One afternoon she came to see them.

"I knew you were at home, and was glad of it. I felt comfortable thinking of your nearness. But I hain't had time to more than call on anybody all summer. When we came in town, we had to rush back again to do the chores. The work has to go on, and you know yourself that you can't do a thing on a farm and have it stay done; especially the housework; that is just like a daily paper—has to be gone over every day. I never can get meals of victuals enough but what there is always one ahead of me.

"Mattie's schoolmate, Nellie Blair, is there with 'em this week, so I just left 'em to visit by themselves, and started for town. She is one of your *heroinish* sort of girls. A real good little thing; but she has got it into her head that she is living a novel. I get her to realizing once in a while that life is filled with dates and battles, and treaties, and discoveries, just like any other history, and she is sweet and sensible. I had a dretful headache the other day, and she bathed it, and sung to me until the pain all left. I told Mattie, before she came out to our house two years ago, that I hated to have her come. I thought she wouldn't enjoy it at all among us working folks; but she did, I guess, for she has come back both summers since, and runs all over the farm. When I first

met her I was most afraid to talk, but I soon got over it. She has her hair fixed in that new way; and it does look so confused that I feel sorry for the girl, and would like to smooth it back. When I first seen her, she looked so much like a poodle that I was afraid I'd call her *it*! But as I said before, she is an awful nice girl, when she doesn't put herself in a book, and lives along with the rest of us. I wanted to say this much, because I have already mentioned her to Madie and Christa, and I didn't think it was exactly kind. I like to have everyone stand for all she is worth. Now we will settle down for a visit."

The two mothers spent a pleasant time until the rest of the family came home. Mrs. Burton had an interested listener while she was relating incidents of her absence.

"My teacher says, 'things are passing strange!' What does she mean?"

"Ask Mrs. Crowan, Josie," said Madie.

"Means that she has studied into the world a good deal, or else she hasn't got far enough along to know just what to say to children!"

"I knew you would have an answer ready."

"I read your 'Thinks' with interest, Mrs. Crowan."

"I don't know what to say! It is hard to tell what you are expected to say when you are complimented. I'm real glad if you was interested, for that is next thing to liking. Lots of folks don't seem to think that you ought to say you're glad. I am awful pleased to see my writings in the paper; and look at them with more interest than ever when they come back to me."

"None but an author knows an author's cares," quoted Christa.

"John tipped a whole lot of green paint on the back stoop the other day. We hain't any of us called him an artist yet. Just because I have *spilled* a few thoughts through your paper, I don't call myself an author."

"We have some photographs," said Mrs. Burton, showing her the pictures of Jean, Ray, Ned, Sada, and little Madie, that she had brought home with her.

"Those are all sensible and natural."

"Here is little Mrs. Erle," said Madie, exhibiting a card, with the face turned so that she was looking over her shoulder.

"That's too bad! for it does seem tedious and mournful to always remember a friend in that uncomfortable position."

"Why don't you have your photograph taken?" asked Christa. "We would all be so glad of one."

"Well, I did try, but it looked so much like those patent medicine advertisements 'before taking,' that I didn't have 'em struck off. I want to have a natural picture, but I do wish it would look a little nice, too, so that folks wouldn't have to make excuses for me and say, 'homely but real good,' while they was showing it."

Mr. Crowan came in to spend the evening, and go home with his wife. It was Josie's bed-time; she had omitted her long prayer, since her father and mother were with her again, and said the simple,

"Now I lay me."

The words came to them from the room where she and her mother had gone.

"I love to hear children say that prayer. There is so much real resting faith in it."

"It is nice for grown people as well," said Mr. Burton.

"Yes," continued Mrs. Crowan, "if they don't say it at morning and noon, as well as at night. It doesn't seem just right for a busy, working Christian to say it all the time. It's selfish—only 'my soul to take;' and a good many of us 'lay down to sleep' a great deal more than there is any need of. I like to see positive goodness. A goodness that takes a body on the *main line*, just because he happened to get on there, and he hain't the energy to switch off, is better than none at all; but there ain't the force and grandeur about him that there is about one that sees every curve, and switch, and pitfall, and steers right on. To see a danger and face it, is better than to shut your eyes and stumble along."

"I should think the devil would take that kind, Lizy."

"He does—some of them—but they ain't exactly the kind that he is working hardest to get. If a man wants to wreck a train, he doesn't go into the sleeping car, but he disables them that stand ahead. If we were only as energetic as the devil, we'd do a good deal more than we do. There, John, let us go home. I've got way out in theology, and when I get to talking on that subject, I have to stop awhile and see where I've gone to."

"She is Mrs. Crowan still," said Mrs. Burton. when she had bidden the visitors good night.

"Yes, and I do not think there ever was another just like her," said Madie.

"The same might be said of all of us."

"But with certain exceptions and modifications, Christa," said her father.

"I wish I could realize the rapid flight of time. I do not seem to at all," said Madie, one morning in February, as she went to the *Headlight* office with her father and sister. "The wind is holding rehearsal to-day, for the drama it is to give us in March.

"How nice it is to have you with us, papa! It comes over me with a glad rush every day. Even after you have been home so long."

"Head your column 'Scattered Thoughts,' as that will be the best description," said Christa, laughing.

Madie was far from feeling as blithely as she would have the others believe. The years of work were beginning to assert themselves.

"You must rest," said Christa.

"After the boys graduate, I will."

The poor of the city needed aid; many of them were families that had spent every cent to come West, and were obliged to take up winter quarters in the city. "They seem to think that money is to be picked up on our broad prairies," said Mr. Roby. "They ought to come in the spring, when they could turn the furrows; they would be more apt to find it."

A benefit was proposed. "Church sociables are usually

such unsociable affairs. We could make more out of a general entertainment," said the leading spirit of the enterprise.

Madie was called upon to take part. "I will sing, if that will be of any assistance to you; but I do not wish to take part in the charades and tableaux."

Clayton was yet unworldly enough to enjoy a home entertainment, and the audience was a large one.

Madie's thoughts were far back in the past all the evening, thinking sadly of Douglas, and surprising herself with the sudden recollection that she was thinking of Ralph, too. "I must do something for Douglas; something for his memory," and a vague plan began to grow into a definite thought.

"It is just spring fever, papa. I shall be rested as soon as summer comes."

"Madie, you must go to the mountains, and visit Jean and Sada. They have written for you so many times. You will come back rested. You said you would take a vacation as soon as the boys graduated, and I shall make you keep your word. You urged papa to go, now I shall be inexorable. Bert and Benjie will take your place. I command you to go home, and do not come back to the office until the summer is gone."

"Some people are born selfish, some achieve selfishness, and some have selfishness thrust upon them," parodied Madie, but she obeyed Christa's command, and went home.

"Even her voice is weary," said Mr. Burton. "I am glad that you managed to drive her away, Christa."

One bright June morning, Madie began to "search for rest."

"I will go to Uncle Joe's first. I want to fulfill my promise to Douglas, and visit his people. Then I will turn westward," she had told her own people. So she went to the old chapel and tenement houses, and saw, herself, the good the legacy of her lost love was doing.

"Do you know the truth now up in Heaven?" she murmured, as she left the grassy-curtained tent where Douglas was lying.

With her western relatives she spent a delightful summer. The inhabitants of that mountain city were surprised that Prof. Mills should spend his vacation there, but his old-time friends were not at all astonished.

He was Madie's escort, by common consent.

"Let us leave briefs, books and chains, and go up and down the mountains. I want Madie to see our rugged scenery."

"Ned, 'where thou goest I will go,' and so shall all my friends," said Sada firmly.

"We will go by rail a little farther west, and then we can begin our wanderings," said Ray.

"We will show Madie a small canon," added Jean.

"I beg of you not to promise any more until we begin our journey," said Ralph, laughing.

"I am always interested in my fellow passengers, and though not one is labeled I believe I can classify many of them," Madie said, when they were steaming through the mountains.

"We will give ourselves up to the pursuit of happiness, and we will win in the race, I think." Jean looked from the window, and from that time did not try to carry on a conversation. Nature had said "See!" and they saw and were dumb. The mountains rolled away before them. On either side of the valley were irrigated fields.

"The armed squadrons of corn are marching to the tune of 100 deg. in the shade," quoted Jean, filled with admiration of the scene before her.

"They have whipped out all their swords and thrown away the scabbards," said Madie, going on with the quotation.

"The world is out of sight. The high tides of midsummer have rolled over it," said Ray, going backward in the page they were quoting from.

Ned was interested. "What book is it that you are reciting to us piece-meal?"

"Neither from Blackstone nor Kent. You should get one of Taylor's works and read it, and you will be better and happier all the rest of the year."

"Thank you, professor, I think I shall profit by your advice."

They stop at a little mining town and go down to the rapid river near. "If this is a view of a 'small canon,' what must the large ones be?" exclaimed Madie, lost in wonder at the strange shape of the rocks that the river had burrowed its way through. "How this stream has settled away from the sunlight, and yonder is a place where the river is almost crowded out of existence."

They go through a winding gorge, the rocks meeting above their heads, the sides dripping and moss-grown. Where pine trees send their roots straight down over the rocks for earth, and lift themselves straight up to the top for air and light. "For downright ambition in the vegetable world, recommend me to a mountain pine," said Ned, as he paused for a moment in his upward climb.

The noonday sun sent down only a glimmer of light.

"The sun seems as anxious to see this spot as we ourselves, and only gets this one peep every day, after all these years of the earth's whirling toward and away from him."

"He has a chance to see a great deal, though," said Jean, taking up Madie's thought and adding one of her own to it, just as they had done in by-gone days.

They met many a little brook dancing over the rocks and hurrying on to the river. "Nature's laughter," said Madie.

A climb up and a scramble down, and they are in a gulch. "These names are all wicked names, Madie, and I will not spoil your enjoyment of the places by repeating them to you."

"I feel the Mighty Presence, and do not wish to have the reverent feeling destroyed. Thank you, Jean," said Madie.

"I should think the witches might hold high carnival here," said Ray, as he looked at the huge boulders.

"I hear a waterfall!" cried Ned, eager as a school-boy, and he went in search. "You can see it by climbing out on this ledge of rocks." So they clamber to the very edge, and see the silver ribbon wave out in the sunlight.

They walk back to the rudely built and sometimes rudely behaved town. "Civilization is not behind but in front of us. There is an ice cream pavilion, and 'Stop that cough!' is on this rock," said Jean.

"We will secure mules and go to the 'snow line' tomorrow," Ray promised them when they had eaten supper.

"If I continue resting so energetically, I can return in a few weeks," said Madie, laughing.

"We are not going to let you indulge in any mental gymnastics. This is a brain recreation," Sada said, and they separated for the night.

The next morning they experienced the novel sensation of a snow storm in July. "I never tried to *climb through* the seasons before," said Madie, "but I have enjoyed the effort." When they began their descent she said to Ralph:

"I can better understand the meaning of a 'shadow of a great rock within a weary land,' after seeing all this coolness and vastness."

"Yes, the rock shadows are mighty here."

"The sun does not shine so brightly to-day. I should like to hear the thunder reverberate along those mountain sides," said Sada.

"Yes, it would add to the grandeur, but not to the tenderness of the scene," Jean said, standing on a rocky point and looking away to the south. "'There are the cattle on a thousand hills!'" she cried, pointing to a moving mass, miles away.

"Here is the 'tenderness,' Jean," said Madie, when she reached the mountain's foot and gathered a few hardy wild flowers. "'He crowneth us with loving kindness.'"

"Can *you* not be kind, too, Madie?" Ralph asked, meaningly. She turned from him suddenly, and went away to Sada.

They indulged in gay badinage on the homeward journey. "Be careful of your sayings!" said Ned,

" 'A chiel's amang us takin' notes.' "

I presume memories of this excursion will be sent to the *Headlight*."

"I should like to tell them, but I am mentally too weak to take hold of such a grand theme and lift it over to them. I can write about a trifling event, but such a day and scene overpowers me. I am the lesser of the two. I shall tell them that I took this delightful trip, and when our readers have the opportunity to 'go and do likewise.' "

The lamps were lighted when they returned to their homes. "We will go and get Madie, and you can go home the shorter way," said Sada, who was anxious to see her little daughter, from whom she had never been separated for so long a time before.

Ralph and Madie followed Jean and Ray. A lady, in one of the lighted houses they passed, was singing *Kathleen Mavourneen*. "Stop! I know that voice; I heard it more than four years ago." The singer turned so she could see her face. "I know the face, too; I heard her singing that song the night I received the telegram that papa was sick."

"I think you are not mistaken; I know that she came from the East. I have only met her once or twice," said Jean.

"I wish you would ascertain if she is the lady whom Madie so well remembers. It is a remarkable coincidence," said Ralph.

The next day they learned to a certainty that Madie's memory was not defective in this instance.

"I am so delighted with her recognition! The song has been a favorite of mine ever since I learned it. I used to sing it frequently to my little niece, who was

equally fond of it. I shall keep my curtains back, hereafter, and sing to passers by," said the singer.

Madie grew happy and strong in the pure mountain air, and surrounded by loved ones.

Jean and Sada lived in adjoining houses. "It is hard for me to tell where I am visiting," she declared merrily.

"Visiting both," said Sada, and so she was every day.

They would have kept her longer, but she was firm in her determination to go to work the first of September.

The last evening she was to spend with them, Ralph came, and the others quietly disappeared. Madie looked out at the shadowy mountains and hummed almost unconsciously:

"It may be for years——"

"Stop! Don't sing 'it may be forever.' I can't bear that."

"Douglas! forgive me! I cannot turn him away from my heart, loving, kind, great-hearted Ralph; he has loved me so long!" she said, silently.

"Madie, I cannot tell you all the love there is in my heart for you alone. Come to me; let me teach it to you daily for the rest of our lives, and I shall not be able to tell it all, even then."

She reached out both hands: "Take me, Ralph, I am so tired."

"My affection is as lasting and deep as my gratitude for your love, dear. The love of a woman like you is the grandest thing on earth."

"I cannot leave home for more than a year, Ralph. Do not urge me to give up my work, when I am so nearly through. Bert will take my place, then. Ralph, I hate to give up the paper; the old numbers seem like my written self."

"You need not give it up. If I am sure of your love I can wait a little longer. You have never been one among women, but have stood out from all others in my thoughts of noble womanhood."

Time was not reckoned in the blissful Paradise they were wandering down, until aroused by Ned's violent coughing.

"Madie must rest," said Sada, with a smile, reading the happiness in her friend's eyes.

The parting the next morning was not a sad one, as all 'knew, or guessed, that she was coming back to them.

CHAPTER XLVI.

FINALE: THE WORD PARTIALLY DEFINED.

The year, that was called the present, when Madie came back to her home, has passed away, and the next has budded, blossomed and yielded its fruitage. We are living in the last month, and laying our plans and dreaming our dreams for the heir expectant of Father Time, who will bear all the treasures and memories of by-gone years on his youthful shoulders for a twelvemonth.

"There will be no place to put my thoughts, in a little while, and I shall not indulge in them so frequently," said Madie, laying down her pen.

Bert and Benjie are both fitted to enter the ranks and file of earnest workers. Bert's chosen profession is journalism, while Benjie is to attend to the bodily ills of the citizens of Clayton.

Robert had gone to Christa in the early autumn.

"The seven years are ended, and I am here."

"Robert, I heard of a woman once who had to 'marry a man to get rid of him;' I believe I shall have to follow in her footsteps," but her expression proved that she was not an unwilling imitator of that other woman. And these two had found the "Northwest Passage to an Earthly Paradise."

"We will begin the new year together. Robert and Christa will be with us," Madie had written to Ralph.

On Christmas day Douglas Chapel was dedicated. It had been erected by Madie, as a school room and chapel for those who could not attend the public school, in honor of the man whose memory she revered.

Clayton had grown to be a busy, noisy, river town, and a rough element of society had entered the corporation. "If we can get them to attend school, evenings through the week, we can gather them in on Sunday." Aggie,

Christa, Lilian and Mr. Roby had promised to oversee it, and the enterprising citizens of Clayton had agreed to contribute to its support.

"Many would rather attend this school near the river than to mingle with the better dressed and more favored ones in the city," said Mr. Roby, taking hold with energy. Christa had planned it, and loving hands had decorated it for the Christmas services. The room was crowded.

"Our school will flourish. We have a large number promised now; and the reading-room in connection with it will not fail to bring them in. Clayton will be a better city for this enterprise. We are slowly but surely finding out the meaning of the word spelled so long ago by Madie. I shall not be at all afraid to go out into streets and gather them in; for at last I have found something to do, though I do not suppose I should have gone out in search of it; you brought it right to me," said Aggie.

"The last day of the old year! The hours I am to spend with Christa Burton are numbered now. Will you come with me, dear?" asked Madie. They go to the office and chapel, and return to their home together.

Their cousins from the west, and their eastern relatives are all there. "We want you to be present yourselves with us, and do not want you to yourselves present us with anything." Christa had written this informal invitation to each, and they had answered her letter in person, but most of them had disobeyed orders relative to the gifts.

The sisters are alone together. "From sixteen to twenty-seven," said Madie. "I have been looking over our work, Christa. I have jotted it all down in this book for you. Here are the written years—the body, but the soul, where is that?"

"Within us all," was the soft answer.

"We have had all the different kinds of talk together, and all the quiet, too."

Mrs. Burton came in to them. "What, crying on your wedding night?"—but her voice left her entirely.

The beautiful wedding ceremony was ended, and they pressed forward with congratulations. "Mamma," said Madie, winding her arms about her. "I am glad and sad, both. But something tells me that we will be together always, even if I do leave you."

Phil gave a hearty caress to each of the brides, and looked as if he would like to extend it to the merry bridesmaids. "Christa, I expected you would say when he asked if you would take this man, 'I guess I can manage.'"

Mrs. Carter was alternately congratulating and warning. "She has had in some respects a hard life, but I believe she enjoys thinking over what a miserable time she has had. A peace policy can be brought in with good effect with her, as well as myself."

"But she is interested in the welfare of all her nephews and nieces," said Phil, who was renewing his old acquaintance with Aggie. "Do you know why you are associated with the poor in my mind?" he asked, suddenly changing the subject.

"No; why am I, Phil?"

"Because the Bible says, 'the poor ye have always with you.' Will you be one of these, Aggie, and wear this for my sake?" His tone was graver than she had ever heard from him before, and Aggie was subdued; but the spirit of mischief was yet strong.

"I suppose I had better, for all the girls are wearing them. But how about the rag-carpet comparison?"

Phil looked at her until her cheeks flamed. "Solid colors, warranted to last a life-time!"

"Don't you see, Phil, that I am going to cry?"

"Let them come, Aggie," with a happy smile; "we are as happy as any of them, aren't we?"

"Yes, Phil; but they will miss us," said Aggie, as she broke away from him and left the library, whither they had wandered away from the others.

Aggie goes with her friends to their room.

"Have you anything to tell?" asked Madie, with a smile.

"Yes. Don't look at me and I will tell it. You needn't think I am going to give up the school; for I am not. I am going to work right here for a year. It seems a little mean of me to give up my mission as soon as I have found it; but I am usually inconsistent. I am going to try to be like you girls, and Jean and Sada, a helper wherever I go. Phil says I do not remind him of anyone but myself, and it is comforting to know that I have a little individuality."

The girls lovingly congratulated her. "Let us hurry back to the others," said Christa. "We will watch the old year out together, before Madie leaves us."

They see Uncle Joe, Aunt Anna, Uncle Ben and Aunt Prue talking with their father and mother, smiling at the happiness of those around them, and looking out toward the sunset of life together.

Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence forgot some of their worldly ideas as they looked at the happy home faces around them.

"I knew years ago that Madie would make her way with her pen, and I ought to have claimed her by right of discovery," said Prof Pearce.

Mrs Roby, sweet-faced and happy, reads a little poem, dedicated to her two friends. Springing from her loving heart it reaches theirs.

"Do not call on me," said Mr. Roby. "I shall have to gather all these ingredients together, to serve up to my readers at breakfast to-morrow morning."

"Shall you attend union services at the chapel to-morrow?" Mrs. Crowan asked of Mrs. Carter.

"No. I am an Episcopalian, and never attend union services."

"It will be a little awkward for her when she first gets to heaven," Mrs. Crowan thinks, as Ned comes up to her.

"You haven't changed greatly, Mrs. Crowan."

"No. There is no need of fretting yourself into wrinkles and gray hairs."

"Your daughter is teaching," said Jean.

"Yes," putting a hairpin in place. "Mattie hain't got a particle of nonsense about her. She likes to teach better than to do anything else; so I advise her to keep at it."

I've talked to Alice just as independent as I have to Mattie; but I rather guess she'll marry. I want her to be satisfied with her lot in life; but I would like it better if she didn't think so much of Henry Downs. He's good enough; but every last one of them Downses calls his wife 'My woman,' and that always sets my teeth on edge. I hate to think of Alice being called 'My woman' or 'Ma' all the days of her life. I suppose you will keep right on contributing to the *Headlight*?" she asked, as she turned abruptly to Madie.

"Yes, I shall send weekly letters to it, and help as much as I can," was the answer.

While Ned, just behind her, pronounced the word that had made her victorious years before: "Finale."

The clock is striking twelve. They stand silently waiting for the last stroke. "Is it all fleeting moments? Does the new year come to us as soon as the old year leaves? It seems to me as if there were just an instant when time is not, and the scepter is held by neither the one nor the other," mused Madie, as the last echo passed to the phantom of a sound.

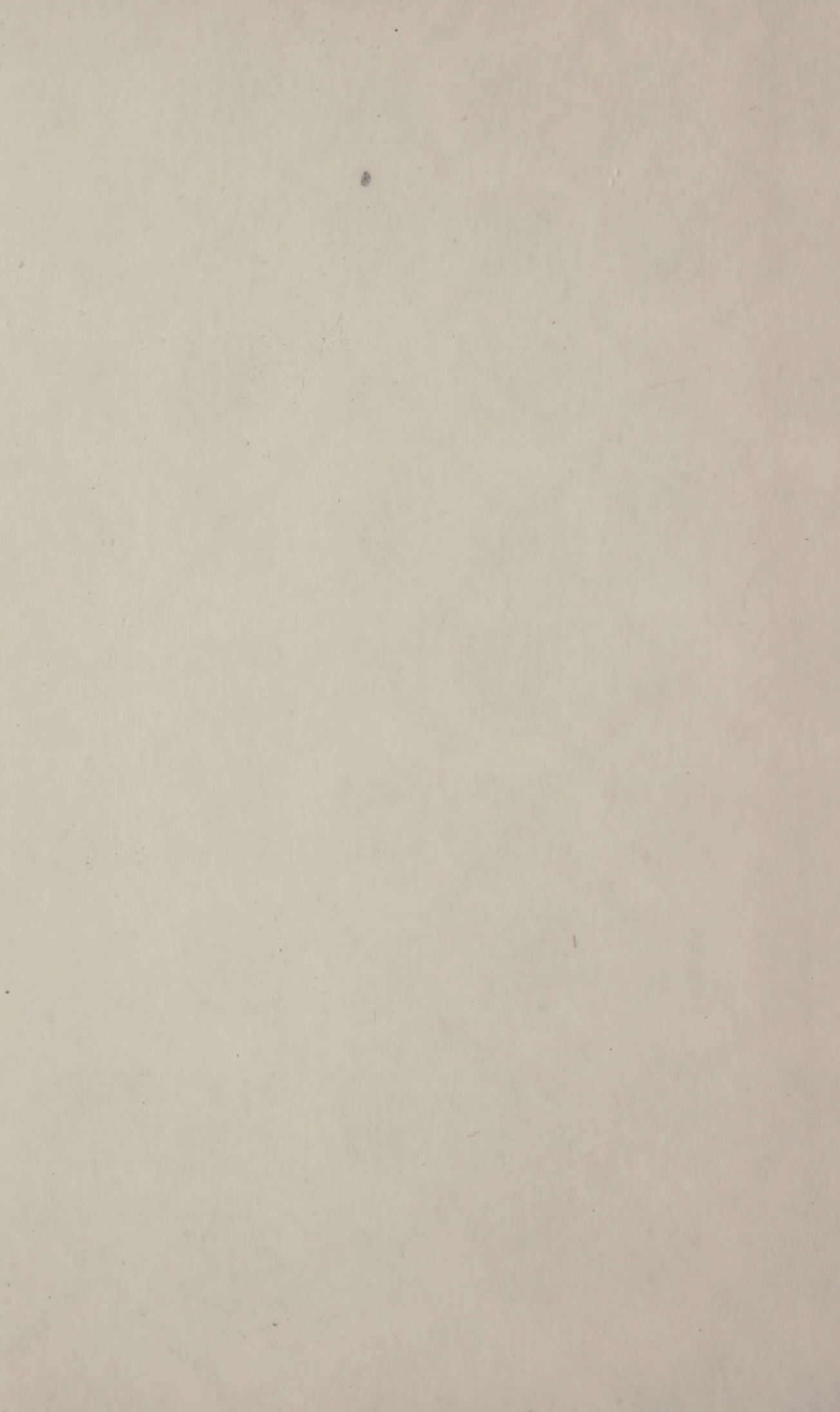
She takes the roll of papers—the business notes of all these years—and hands them to Bert. She looks at all, but lets her glance rest longest on Christa, who has stood by her so faithfully, and says, though her eyes are bright with the tears in them: "The Torch did not go out, if the eldest were girls. We have given it 'swing enough' and there is no 'forfeit to pay.' Even down to little Josie, we can all cry 'Jack's Afire!'"

The story is ended. The attempt has not been made to write a perfect life; only a human life—a lesson for human people. If one heart is made lighter, or one face brighter, if there is brought a germ of faith in God or His world to a single mortal, because of something between its covers, the object for which it was written is accomplished. We have tried to carry you into their home life. Yet, after all, we know that you have not been led to know them as we wished you to.

There is so much that must ever be unspoken, unwritten and—yes—even unthought. There are many things we can really enjoy that are not tangible enough to even *think* about.

We know and do not know! Perhaps we just touch them with our souls, or—well—it will have to be left a blank. The bridge reaches from the knowable to the unknowable, and there is no prop for the far end of the span, unless it be in the “Beautiful Beyond.”

So the pen is laid aside!





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